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PROPHETS OF YESTERDAY

PROPHETS OF YESTERDAY AND THEIR MESSAGE FOR TO-DAY

BY

JOHN KELMAN

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THE WILLIAM BELDEN NOBLE LECTURES

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PROPHETS OF YESTERDAY

I

HEBRAISM AND HELLENISM

LOOKING at the names of the three great English writers whom we are to study in these lectures, there may be some who are at the outset more or less prejudiced by the fact that these are classics. "The works everybody admires are the ones nobody examines. Each generation receives them as a precious burden and passes them on to the next without as much as looking at them." There is much truth in this amusing criticism of the classics, and the more truth there is in it, the more necessity there is for reviving, as far as one can, an interest in our priceless heritage. The very fact that a book is a classic, so far from embedding it in its time, removes and sets it free for all time. As a matter of fact, each one of these great English authors represents a characteristic force which has existed and spoken in every century of English literature. Dr. Moffatt has well observed in another connection that, "The interests of Christianity are not served best by those who

endow themselves with the title of 'prophetic,' and break away from the historical base of their religion. No gain is worth the loss incurred by a wanton disparagement of the classical past."

There are certain great tides which bear onward the spirit of man: and while the precise and detailed movement of these is never twice exactly the same, yet the direction and general intent of them does not change, but remains identical. None of us either lives or thinks for himself or by himself alone. A great part of what we are and stand for is due to some spirit of the age which has caught us upon its current, and in whose service our individual powers are enlisted.

There are many such tides, but two of them are the most potent and constant in our literature, and indeed in all human nature and society. These have been called the tides of Hebraism and Hellenism. The prophet Zechariah in ancient days, speaking the Word of the Lord, cried to Israel: "I have raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece." There is in the whole Old Testament no more significant or suggestive passage for the student of the history of thought than that. It is quite true that the names Hebraism and Hellenism are to a large extent inaccurate. We shall see

how constantly the lines cross, and how many elements usually associated with one of these may be claimed with perfect justice for the other. Yet the Greek and Hebrew races did stand in the main for certain attitudes towards life, points of view from which to look upon its problems, and tendencies in conduct. In the meantime, for lack of better words, these may stand.

We may take it for granted that the Hebrew classics are tolerably familiar, although the harsher aspect of them is very apt to be exaggerated. They are familiar because of the familiarity of the Hebrew Scriptures in the vernacular of every land, and the immense literature of Old Testament commentary and exposition which has in many instances attained so high a level. Until recently Hellenism was in a very different condition, and it was quite possible for men, otherwise well-educated, seriously to misjudge it. Of recent years a splendid and voluminous literature has been interpreting Greece to the English-speaking nations of the world. There were the earlier books and translations, such as Mahaffy's *Greece*, Rawlinson's *Herodotus*, Jowett's *Plato*, Jebb's *Sophocles*, and others, to say nothing of such magnificent transcripts as the Alkestis in

Browning's *Balaustion's Adventure*. All sorts of shorter treatises, such as Moellendorf's *Apollo*, have been throwing light upon particular problems. Meyer's *Classical Essays*, Butcher's *Aspects of the Greek Genius* and his *Harvard Lectures*, and lately Thompson's *Greeks and Barbarians*, have done much for a better understanding of the Greek spirit. Walter Pater's whole writing may be said to be a more or less conscious exposition of that spirit at its best. His *Marius the Epicurean* and his *Greek Studies*, together with his *Renaissance*, make one of the most valuable contributions to this subject that exist in the English tongue. Professor Gilbert Murray, not only in his translations, but in such books as his *Euripides* and his *Rise of the Greek Epic*, Adam in his *Religious Teachers of Greece*, and Stewart in his *Myths of Plato*, have done much for the elucidation of the deeper problems. These are but a few selections from a very considerable English literature upon this subject, and they have had a wide and powerful influence in changing the mind of the religiously disposed modern towards the ideals of ancient Hellas. Professor Butcher felt that he had to defend the Greek spirit against those who conceived of it as "eccentricity tinged

with vice." To-day it is generally recognized as the spirit of truth, beauty, and liberty.

Before we discuss these in detail, one further point needs to be noticed. There has of late been a tendency to call in question the Hellenism of the Hellenes, who are represented as having been not only a commonplace but an extremely sordid people in the main, among whom certain individuals spoke and wrote from an entirely different plane. These expositors of the higher Greek cult are regarded as more or less sports, rising indeed upon the soil, but entirely separated from the character and thought of their fellows. To this it may be answered that there is no doubt a considerable element of truth in it. The highest thought of any age and any nation must necessarily be cherished especially by the elect, and there must be vast numbers who are little influenced by it. Yet, on the other hand, a nation which produced the work of the century after Perikles must have had an audience as well as teachers; and although in the theatre and in the market-place there must have been many who listened to the great plays and orations for amusement rather than for edification, yet the playwrights and the orators could not have produced the works which issued in such

copious floods from their genius, unless there had been a strong desire and a widely-spread taste which backed them in their ideals.

The interest in truth for its own sake is the first and most obvious of the characteristics of the Greek spirit. It can hardly be called a passion for truth so much as an infinite curiosity. They had in their veins the blood of adventurers, and the unfamiliar was always welcome to them. They loved knowledge for its own sake, apart altogether from its consequences. They had no distracting *arrière pensée*, leading them to suppress or modify any views which may have appealed to their reason, for the sake either of religion or of popular prejudice. So early Greece placed a profound confidence in rationality, and, with a simplicity and daring which are possible only to the young, thought out and stated its views of things in general.

Yet deep in the blood of the Greeks was that *sophrosyne* or moderation, which is more and more recognized as their most characteristic attitude to life. In all ages eager spirits are apt to exaggerate, and while that lends a certain forcefulness and so gives impetus to an opinion, it undoubtedly leads ultimately to a mistrust of the

validity of such opinions. It is curious to read in an account of Li Hung Chang the following remarkable passage: "It would seem that a great many people do not imagine they are doing things at all unless they are going to extremes. From the cold of the Kalgan snows they rush to the heats of India, or the other way about. It is either murder for them or a sickening honey-kindness. They want to yell at the top of their voices from a temple pagoda, or to go down a deep well and whisper at the bottom. Some brains are so constituted or mixed, that if a thing does not appear white to their mental vision it is black, if it is not yellow it is green, if not red it is blue. They take no bath at all or they scrub their bodies till there is no skin left. They eat like hogs and just so often, or they go fasting and scorn a chicken's tongue or a thin cracker." This is just such a criticism as the Greeks might have passed on the Barbarians. It is a protest against feverishness, and storm and fury generally, in favor of a calm and balanced mind and view of things. An English counterpart of this Chinese criticism occurs to mind in connection with one of Mr. Hichens's characters in *The Call of the Blood:* "He was a man who had an instinctive hatred of heroics. His taste re-

volted from them as it revolted from violence in literature. They seemed to him a coarseness and crudity of the soul, and almost inevitably linked with secret falseness." This element of moderation is really the main theme of Thompson's *Greeks and Barbarians*. One feels it perpetually in reading the History of Herodotus. The Greeks may now and then rush to violent extremes, as in the cruelty of the Athenians to the people of Melos, yet this is certainly exceptional, and the point of difference between them and their Oriental enemies lies just here. While eastern potentates wallow in excess the Greek looks on with a kind of contemptuous wonder. The same principle holds good in regard to their literary achievement. Readers of Walter Pater will remember the following passage from his essay on *Style:* "With Flaubert, the search, the unwearied research, was not for the smooth, or winsome, or forcible word, . . . but quite simply and honestly, for the word's adjustment to its meaning." The first condition of this must be of course, to know yourself, to have ascertained your own sense exactly. Nothing could be more Greek than that. Juvenal has a great line in which he tells us that when the gods want to destroy a man they

grant him his desire. There is in the Greek spirit a perpetual sense of reticence and withholding, of desire not wholly yielded to, of self-control that acquiesces in the frustrations of the gods, and so keeps a man fit for a higher intellectual destiny than can ever be the lot of him who clamors for everything and gets all he clamors for. Truth without violence is the Greek ideal. Sorrow, and deprivation, and desire never wholly fulfilled, are in the train of the goddess. If it were not so she would be divine for man no more.

The Hebrew desires and demands truth no less urgently than the Greek, yet the spirit is somehow different. It is wild truth that the Hebrew desires, truth with the bit in its teeth. He has little interest in that calm scientific truth which is never in danger of running away with him. To change the metaphor, the light by which he lives and prophesies is not white light, diffused and steady, but the glare of flaming torches in the dark. The truth which the Hebrew desires is of the nature of oracles rather than of reasoning, for the most part; and although Jehovah condescends to reason on more occasions than one with His difficult and unreasonable worshippers, yet the Hebrew truth comes upon the conscience of man

absolutely and imperiously. One consequence of this is the necessary sense of violence which appears so perpetually in the Old Testament prophets. They could not and they never did profess to look upon the mingled spectacle of the world dispassionately. Armed with all the divine artillery of Sinai they continued its thunder through the centuries. They spoke with authority, with emphasis and with demand, that are separated by measureless distances from the open mind and the impartial hearing given alike to good and evil by the Greek.

The second characteristic of Hellenism is that of beauty. We cannot linger upon this except to remind ourselves that there are those who can only be "made perfect by love of visible beauty." The Greek holds that loveliness has rights of its own, apart from moral or even intellectual considerations; that it is in itself a good thing and a fitting end for human endeavor. True, he insists that beauty must be rational as well as truth, and refuses to run to riot and excess in this direction or in any other. Yet within these limits he is a superb advocate of the human and divine worth of charm, apart from all else, and that is an essential part of his message. Talking of modern men and

of the modern spirit as he conceives it, Anatole France has said: "They cannot glimpse the divine shades, the immortal spectres that wander by, sheltering under the undying myrtles. . . . They have not Virgil, and we call them happy because they have lifts and electric lights. Yet, be sure, a single beautiful line of poetry has wrought the world more good than all the masterpieces of mechanism." "As for knowledge," says Euripides, "I bear her no grudge. I take joy in pursuit of her. But the other things are great and shining. Oh, for life to flow towards that which is beautiful, till man through both light and darkness should be at peace and reverent, and, casting from him laws that are outside justice, give glory to the gods."

It has been commonly imagined that the Hebrew genius had no sense of beauty, yet nothing could be further from the truth. There was a great self-denying ordinance which forbade imagery, either in painting, or sculpture, or needlework, and which confined the ancient Hebrew art for the most part to those wonderful and tantalizing patterns that run the imagination on beyond the eye, and seem perpetually to suggest a fuller artistic life than is permitted to the artist. There

was a reason for this in the universal idolatry which surrounded Israel's little oasis of Palestine — in Egypt, round all the East, and across Phoenicia. Representative art in such a period could not have been safe for such a people, and so we have the story of Bezaleel, surely the most pathetic in all the world. When art is utterly forbidden, he alone is permitted, "once, and only once, and for One only," to decorate the innermost shrine with the artistic carving of the Ark of Israel's Covenant. Then, having finished the work, he must leave it in the dark and silence of the holy place, surrendering all that drew forth the artist's soul of him to the will of the God of Israel.

Yet it would be a huge mistake to imagine that the ancient Hebrews were destitute of a sense of beauty. Their songs, their appreciations of the heavens and the earth, the pathos and the idealism of their inward look upon the play of forces within the soul, prove them artists of a high order. Where, however, the Greek restrains himself by the simple precept that beauty must be rational, the Hebrew speaks of the beauty of holiness; and blends and identifies his sense of beauty with that stern righteousness, in which alone human nature

can find either completeness or health.* Thus, once more, the difference between the Greek and the Hebrew spirit is not, as has been supposed, that Greece loves beauty while Israel does not. All that we can justly claim is that we find a greater freedom in Greece for the indulgence of the desire of beauty, ministered through the medium of the senses.

A distinction between the Greek and the Barbarian, not less central and vital than that of moderation as against extravagance, is the distinction between liberty and tyranny. The whole ideal of the Far East was that the king might do what he pleased, and it was from that that we were saved by Greece. "A well ordered city on a rock," says Phocylides, "is better than frenzied Nineveh." † In this sense the Greeks have well been called soldiers of liberty in the war of humanity. They fought to uphold the flag of the human spirit against all the forces which would crush and humiliate it. They asserted, not less than the Hebrews, the value of the individual

* It is interesting in this connection to remember the etymology of the English word "holiness," which is connected with "wholeness," "healthiness," "heiligkeit," and links on the Hebrew with the Greek conception.

† Thompson, *Greeks and Barbarians*, p. 88.

and his personality. "To the Egyptian priest the Hellene appears to say, I am a layman. I worship in the sunshine a God who is both human and divine . . . . They needed a worship which should do more than glorify their God, one that should give utterance to themselves." * Yet liberty divorced from law must always transgress the bounds of moderation: therefore the element of law was always emphatic in the Greek conception of liberty: there is all the difference in the world between the liberty of the disciplined and that of the undisciplined temper. It is curious that the Greek word *askesis* has been taken over in the religious conception of asceticism, and has suffered something in the change. The typical ascetic occupies himself with law until very frequently the sense of liberty is lost. The Greek idea of *askesis* was but the habit of the athlete who, in order to prepare himself for liberty, exercised himself by discipline. As Thompson expressively puts it: "The Celt hears the sirens and follows them: the Greek hears them and unwillingly sails past."

The Hebrew is equally with the Greek aware of the difficulty of riding the marches between liberty

* Butcher, *Some Aspects of the Greek Genius*, p. 32.

and law. It is quite true that we have such passages as that in Ezekiel, where the prophet sees the chariot that represents the glory of the Lord approaching, and with a sense of mere power and brute force overwhelming his spirit, grovels in the dust until he hears the voice of the Lord saying to him, "Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee." No more eloquent nor perfect plea for the liberty of the human spirit, even in the presence of God, was ever made. Yet, in the hands of the Pharisees, liberty disappeared entirely, and law produced a race of unintelligent pedants whose conception of morality is well stated in the famous epitome, "Touch not, taste not, handle not." Yet St. Paul has expressed, from the Hebrew side, as noble a sense of freedom as ever moved the heart of Greece. Liberty and law met in his great synthesis: — "not without law, but under law to Christ." The service of Christ was indeed perfect freedom for him.*

* It is wonderfully interesting to compare with Paul's words those which are quoted by Herodotus as uttered by a Spartan who was asked by Xerxes why, when so small a number of Greeks were opposed to him, they did not run away, adding that this puzzled him, especially as "you say they are free, and there is no one to stop them." The Spartan answered, "They are free, oh king, but not free to do everything, for there is a master over them named Law, whom they fear more than thy servants fear thee." (See Professor Gilbert Murray, *Euripides and his Age*, p. 40.)

From all this we can see pretty clearly how defective the popular classification of Hebraism and Hellenism is. We are apt to contrast the stiffest pedantry of the rabbis with the sweetest songs of Pindar or of Sappho, and to take these as typical. It is like the old distinction between classical and romantic, at which every new generation tries its hand, and which it passes on, after certain fresh attempts at definition, very much in the same position as it found it. We have already seen how near the finest Greek spirit comes to the finest Hebrew spirit, when they are at their best, and in how many instances the lines are crossed. When Ecclesiastes tells us not to be righteous overmuch, he is surely talking Greek rather than Hebrew. When Jesus says to the Greeks that the corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die, He is explaining His cross by a figure which could not have been more familiar to them, and leading them on to common ground where the cross would no longer appear foolishness to them. The Hebraism of Æschylus is as heavy as that of Jeremiah. The Hellenism of Canticles is as lighthearted as the songs of Greece.*

* In the *Prometheus* cycle there is the clearest example of all. In *Prometheus Vinctus*, the play which remains to us intact, we have what has been supposed to be the Hellenic revolt against the

All this is true, and yet undoubtedly there is something in the old distinction. The worship of Jehovah in Palestine was always finding itself struggling against the other civilizations of the world of its time. The Hebrews prided themselves upon being a peculiar people, cut off from the rest of the world. It was their glory to emphasize their differences. To act like men — i.e. like any of their neighbors — was shame to them. The tradition ran on into the Christian Church, and some of the early Christians found in the Greek virtues only splendid vices. When Alexander set forth upon his marvelous career he told Aristotle that it was his intention to make all men Hellenes. That intention met with violent opposition and proved impossible in many lands: and perhaps it was at that moment, when the culture of Greece invaded the East, that the two civilizations stood out in the strongest contrast. Once before they had similarly stood out, when, under Xerxes, the East had invaded Hellas; and these

reign of law — that revolt with which Shelley so passionately associated himself. But Æschylus wrote two other plays upon the theme of Prometheus. The fragments which we possess of one of these are sufficient to prove that Prometheus came round in the end, and acknowledged the supremacy of law over a dangerous and irresponsible liberty.

are the two moments which, more than all the rest of history, prove a deep racial distinction between the spirit of the East and that of the West in ancient days.

For us, the use of the words Hebraism and Hellenism must ultimately be a question of emphasis rather than of absolute difference. In life's main effort, what is to be the guiding or the master impulse? Is it to be immediate fulfillment and the grasping of the joy of the hour? Or is it to be a postponed fulfillment, while the immediate duty is often grim self-denial? The Hebrew emphasis on the latter alternative goes beyond the Greek *askesis;* and, of course, one must also remember the effect upon all such tendencies which is produced by the Christian belief in immortality. For the Greek, who had no sense of an eternal destiny of the individual, fulfillment must be found here and now or not at all. For the Christian the splendors of the future promise of life in Christ were so brilliant as to extinguish the fires of present passion. Thus Hebraism has come to stand for the sway of conscience and Hellenism for that of desire. The Hebrew is regarded as essentially a protestant, whose main business in the older days was to purify Orientalism from the abuses into

which it had fallen, when desire ran too free. Stern and austere, he faced the world by the might of law and conscience, and frowned upon relaxations of authority. The Greek, on the other hand, with his delight in knowledge, in rational beauty and in freedom, tempered his desires with the sense of measure, only that he might give to life a finer poise and balance, and thus make it more perfect in the immediate present. His flexibility and compromise were perpetually opposed to what he felt to be the dangerous simplicity of the Orient. He expressed the difference in many ways, but in none more strikingly than in his architecture. Anyone who has crossed from Egypt to those temples whose ruins stand upon the shores of Paestum or the hills of Sicily, recognizes at once the different spirit into which he has come. The bulging pillars of Egypt, the slanting walls that imitate a mountain and attempt to bear an almost insupportable weight, are exchanged for new lines with a spring and lightness altogether foreign to the Egyptian mind. The very steps leading up to the portico are curved so as to produce the same effect. Where the Egyptian pillar bulges almost to bursting, the straight shaft of the Greek airily cuts a line into

the stone, as if to indicate that it could have stood a far greater pressure if that had been necessary.

Two pictures seem to express this distinction poetically. Sargent's famous picture of "The Prophets" gives as perfect a presentation of the Hebrew genius as could possibly be imagined. Dante's description of the great classical sages walking upon the enamelled green of Limbo with their slow-moving eyes stands in exquisitely pathetic contrast.

The Hebrew is represented best by his prophet, essentially a man with a message. He is indeed a man of passionate desires, but his desires are suppressed by the sterner prophecy which stands for righteousness alone and leads only to the will of God, who is absolute, authoritative and commanding. The Greek is represented by a philosopher with a thesis or a poet with a song. He will discuss matters which are closed forever to the Hebrew, as dispassionately as he might discuss mathematics. He is not one who is able ever to rest in truth attained, and to dogmatize upon it in Hebrew fashion as a matter of life and death. It is the quest of truth rather than its attainment that fascinates him; and he is prepared to enjoy the hunt in long cross-country journeys of sophis-

try, that will lead him through the most fantastic thickets. Indeed, part of the Greek delight in sophistry is just the fun of detecting fallacies and exposing them.

Taking these two names then as tendencies, differences in emphasis rather than mutually closed departments, we have the task of watching them as they reappear as rival currents in English literature. They may be said to divide between them the attention and the devotion of mankind in every age and century, for they are quite fundamental, and represent ultimate types of human life and thought. Our business, however, is with the literature of England, and we may begin with it at those wonderful springs which are the fountains of all later developments of thinking, in the fourteenth century. It is true that even before that time the two types had both appeared. In the middle ages Gothic architecture, with its austere beauties and its fantastically delicate spirituality, stands for the blend rather than the rivalry of the two human motives. Out of the squalor and ugliness of the ancient city there arises from the depths the sheer idealism of the Gothic cathedral. Here, undoubtedly, desire is

curbed by conscience; but in high vision and strong-winged aspiration desire finds its satisfaction as well as its restraint. The rude soul of the age turns its eyes heavenward and discovers to its surprise that at God's right hand there are pleasures as well as duties forevermore.

Yet it was in the fourteenth century that this contrast came to its most marked and formative period. That century is dominated by two great figures in England — Chaucer, standing in the light, and Langland in the shadow. Chaucer is the very incarnation of brisk alertness. He is an "elf," who is prepared to look upon the whole spectacle of the world, not only with an uncritical but with a kindly and appreciative and roguish humour. Langland is dominated by a sense both of the sins and of the sorrows of the world. He cannot be at ease for the deep pity that moves him for his kind. He is the apostle of work rather than of pleasure, and his moral earnestness expresses itself in much that has awakened in these latter days into what is known as the social conscience. Chaucer looks around him with an undiscriminating eye and smilingly pronounces that "here is God's plenty." He never misses a fact and he seldom stops to moralize about it. He makes the most of things

and rejoices that the world is so full of them. He takes them at their face value and thoroughly enjoys himself. Langland cannot see the view for the unfortunate victim of society in the foreground: — "My churl for whom Christ died." Chaucer sets his strangely assorted band of pilgrims riding merrily on their way to Canterbury. Langland sees Piers the plowman riding to a joust at Jerusalem, and perceives in him a contemporary version both of the good Samaritan and of Jesus Christ Himself.

From the fourteenth century onward the seed sown by Chaucer and Langland steadily bore fruit from age to age. Langland's reality lies in work and in bettering the conditions of work, unless indeed that be hopeless. Chaucer's is the simpler form of reality which centers in human nature. It sets *fortitudo* against *accidie*, and tells a man to be brave when moods of darkness threaten him, and to endure to the end by the acceptance of common duties and experiences. These simple and eternal things he sends down the centuries to keep England wholesome, its men honorable, and its women gentle and kind. His "very parfit gentle knight" and his woman whose emblem is the daisy, have done much to

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send the best English ideals on through future ages. His appeal to English men and women is that they shall not seek for recondite ideals or for foreign ones, but be their true and natural selves, so that they and their children may purify English life at the springs. Thus Chaucer sows in England's field, not the scarlet poppies of passion, but the daisy in its regal simplicity of white and gold. Langland cannot be content with these things. He sees too clearly the abuses and the evils which are sowing dragons' teeth around him, and he wants to tear up and root out the enemies of God and man that have invaded the soil of his native land. His is a haggard countenance, sending down to the future a cry of protest that grows sadder and sadder to the end. He is the champion of man's rights and duties, and he cannot stay to play with flowers or to jest with maids.

It would be easy to show the presence of these two strands of tendency in every generation, from the fourteenth century until now, but this is beyond our scope: it is sufficient for us here to note that at certain times they became singularly manifest and were indeed so clearly realized as to divide the field between them. Such a time was the seventeenth century, with its Roundhead and

its Cavalier. Both of these were idealists, although their ideals were arrived at along different directions of the mind. The Roundhead was an idealist after the fashion of the prophets of Israel, who saw little to praise in the beauty of this world, and set his affections upon the world to come. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and whether he lived or died, whether he loved or fought, his Old Testament was open at his hand. The Cavalier sang and drank, fought his battles for honor and often behaved himself unseemly. Yet he too had a vision of manhood which in his own way he was following; and this at least can be said of him, that his courage seldom failed him in times of stress and danger. If the light that lit his soul was more of this world than of the next, at least he followed it, and believed in it, and was its child. It is impossible to call him a mere sensualist or worldling, for he was capable of enduring much hardness and loss, and even death itself, unflinching, in the cause he had espoused.

In the middle of this century there appears one of the most wonderful men that ever lived. John Bunyan, who is only coming to be known now after so long a time, was a man of infinite observation. Not Chaucer himself had a sharper eye,

and that quick ear of his caught echoes of the various life around him and reproduced them with a fidelity to truth and an accuracy of judgment which continue to astonish all who study him. His *Pilgrim's Progress*, commonly considered simply as an edifying book, suitable for the Sunday reading of the young, turns out to be an amazingly acute criticism of his times; and he who would understand the inwardness of the seventeenth century will find many unexhausted mines in that famous volume. Christian walks from the town of Destruction to the Celestial City through all the possible phases of the journey of life, and this affords an exhaustive opportunity for presenting, in most of its various aspects, the actual life of his times. Now it will be noticed that the very central idea of that book is expressed in the two successive companions of the Pilgrim. For certain stretches at the beginning he is accompanied by Faithful. Here we have the unrelenting Puritan Hebraist, to whom neither the fascinations nor the dangers of the Restoration ever appeal. He is a man of single-hearted austerity, unappreciative of either the natural or the human scenery of the journey, seeing visions and pressing forward to them, and finding all else but a vain

show. When Faithful has finished his course at the stake in Vanity Fair, Hopeful immediately appears upon the scene: and a stronger contrast than that between the characters of Faithful and Hopeful it would be impossible to imagine. Not that they would have differed in their theology, nor indeed in their central earnestness of religious faith and purpose. Yet here we have a man as widely appreciative as the other is narrowly concentrated. His gift of appreciation leads him into many temptations and dangers, yet it supplies an element in the Christian life which the earlier austerities of the book entirely leave out. Thus, all unconsciously, John Bunyan has perceived the alternate appeal of Hebraism and Hellenism in his time, even to the Puritan soul, and has given us one of its most charming expressions.

These are, as we have said, but specimens of the intertwining processes of thought which, more than any others, dominate the progress of English literature and mind. On the one hand there is the tendency towards acceptance, which may find its extreme expression in the most conscienceless *laissez-faire*, regarding all morality as a matter of indifference, but which also may express itself in very charming forms, whose natural instinct and good

taste keep them from excess. It represents the Christian spirit in its most winsome aspect. On the other hand there is always upon the air some echo of the harsh bugle-notes of militant conscience, calling for rejections instead of acceptances, for oppositions instead of acquiescences, for redemption instead of betterment. Now and again time isolates one or other of these. It becomes dominant and its rival quiescent, so that in looking back along the line of history the age seems to be exclusive in its devotion to its own ideal. "So we half-men struggle," and that is the process of our inner history. Yet, though multitudes of individuals may be blind to one half of life, and may live as the mere devotees of the other half, there will always be left a certain remnant of those who are not satisfied with the one-sided and partial idealism of an age, and who espouse and foster other elements which are waiting for their opportunity when the tendency shall have changed once again.

It might seem at first sight that this perpetual alternation must entirely break the continuity of history, until its long sweeping lines of process become mere detached fragments unconnected with one another. Yet it must be remembered on the

other side that there is always a strong continuity where there is life, and that the binding element between different ideals and tendencies is just that vitality which carries on the types of the world. Now it is well known that there is no influence more quickening to mental vitality than the confluence of ideas. It has been remarked that in a sense the greatest triumph which any tradition can accomplish is to rear noble and worthy rebels. But besides that it is undoubtedly true that human life leaps up at the meeting-points of great streams of idea. One has only to remember the effect of the Norman Conquest, the Crusades, and the Renaissance, to see how true this is: and there is no question that the touch between Hebrew and Greek, no matter at how remote an age from their original times, has always stimulated and carried on such vitality.

When we come to the Eighteenth Century we find ourselves in what has been frequently called the Augustan Age. It prided itself on its classicism, in contrast with the severe Hebraism of the seventeenth century. The long battle between Puritan and Cavalier was over. The great experiments of the Revolution and the Commonwealth had been made. The inevitable swing of the pen-

dulum had brought the short-lived Restoration, with its accompanying whole-hearted laxity of conscience. Now the land had settled into something which was more regulated and restrained than Restoration morality, and which was indeed intensely and aggressively conventional. It was constructed on classical models, and they produced a very remarkable result. It was an age when men took time to live and to express themselves. In the clubs of Fleet Street the art of conversation flourished, and roved with perfect freedom round about the discovered world. When the talk was over in these clubs something had generally got itself said. The manner of saying things also attained a new perfection. In the prose of Addison and his compeers the written English language reached a point of delicacy and finish, which is possible only to an age that lives within margins and has wide leisure. Compared with "the spacious times of great Elizabeth," the Eighteenth Century was infinitely more spacious, as it was also opulent in all manner of human riches.

Yet that century was not truly classical. The Georgian architecture is proof of that. The eye of the Greek was always upon the object, as Matthew

Arnold has said. He saw the truth of things direct and in plain vision. The Eighteenth Century had a wider world of interests than the Greeks, but its eye was never only on the object. Take, for instance, this one characteristic line: "As when the moon, refulgent lamp of night . . ." Nobody ever said or could have said that while looking at the moon. It was only afterwards that it could be said, while the writer was remembering, on the one hand, that he had looked at the moon, and, on the other hand, the way in which it would be acceptable to describe that fact to his readers. Thus the Eighteenth Century perpetuated in a self-conscious and diluted style the rebound towards Hellenism which followed the great Hebraic period of the Puritans. But, if pure Hellenism cannot hold the world forever, still less can this kind of imitation of it retain its grasp, and the change was overdue long before the end of the century.

The French Revolution and the subsequent wars of Napoleon brought the European world sharply back to reality. There was little religion in it and a great deal of anti-religion, according to the letter of the ancient faith; but nevertheless it was a genuine revival of Hebraism. A direct-

ness in dealing with facts, and a general earnestness of spirit and of conscience, are very marked in the leaders of the new spirit. Wordsworth sings:

Me this unchartered freedom tires;
I feel the weight of chance desires.

George Eliot writes her great books — one hardly knows whether to call them novels or sermons. Thomas Carlyle bursts upon the world with the most undiluted Hebraism that it has seen since Oliver Cromwell. Yet paganism, like its champion king, is an unconscionable time in dying, and the "Pilgrims' March" is constantly interrupted by the wild and lawless music of the Venusberg. Swinburne will substitute desire for law, and "say of vice, What is it?" The decadents, with lesser genius, will haunt the remoter corners of the pagan extreme. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, with sad and sweet and marvelously convincing voice, will plead against the harshness of Carlyle and his school, for the legitimate rights of the flesh and the beauty of the world. At last will come Matthew Arnold, leading no revolt against law and morality, but only crying, "O that Ishmael might live before thee," to an age whose respectability seems to have chosen Isaac for its only represent-

ative — a rather dull saint and colorless hero. Arnold stands for the best of the Greek life and ideal, with its balance of liberty and law, its revolt against mere rude barbaric strength, and its plea for beauty and ideals in their own right.

Simultaneously in America there had arisen a massive and wholesome Puritanism which made one of the deepest marks on the history of the world. America was the first to welcome Carlyle, who stirred the Puritan in her blood. Matthew Arnold's fortunes there were not at first so happy. Yet America had at Concord, with Emerson at its head, a school of Hellenistic thought of rare and splendid significance. It is frequently supposed that the Concord movement has had its day and passed, but the days of such things are long and do not pass. They sleep and wait their wakening.

Meanwhile there had been working, in England and in Italy, one whose effect upon his times and the future was as yet but little known. Robert Browning, as we shall see, was variously gifted. He could grasp men and things with the iron hand of Carlyle, yet he could wear the velvet glove of Arnold. He is the representative of that synthesis of conscience and desire under which we

live to-day. He is the supreme reconciler for the English people of their Hebrew with their Greek inheritance.

Note on the classics. (*Cf. page 1.*)

The disparagement of the classics in the present day is, however, more deliberate than a matter of mere neglect. There is a strong school which regards the study of the classical languages as sheer waste. They are dead languages, it is said, why disturb them? Leave them in their honored graves and rear over them as costly a monument as you please, but by all means read the books of today and not of yesterday. This criticism may be further extended. It applies not merely to books written in the Greek and Latin languages, but to all books even in our own language which are not wet from the press. There will always be a remnant of those who will be content to abide the verdict of the ages, and who will continue to believe that the value of "up-to-dateness" depends largely upon the date. As for the older tongues, Greek can never be a dead language. It is and will always continue to be a living spirit. To the end of time everything that is brilliant and fascinating to the human mind will owe something of its vitality to that great outbreak of humanism, which has been so appropriately named "The glory that was Greece."

It occurs to one to ask whether something of the antipathy to the classics in modern education may not be due to a failure in the method of teaching them. The usual way of teaching any language is to instruct the pupils in the grammar of it, and then afterward

to come on by slow degrees to reading, and in rare cases to conversation. Surely this is to put the cart before the horse. Grammar is the philosophy of language, and it is hard upon the young to study the philosophy of that which they do not know in itself. If by any means we could reverse the order, and impress the growing mind with the beauty of a living spirit and the splendor of an enduring message, we might very well defer much of the study of mere grammar and analysis until a later time. One thing is certain, and that is that our present system has, in countless instances, rendered the ancient languages odious to young minds, and by doing so has prejudiced these minds against a priceless heritage of truth and beauty and human interest. We first killed the "dead languages," and then complained that they were dead.

II

CARLYLE AND ARNOLD

IN our last chapter we referred to those great tides of thought which sweep through the history of nations, and especially called attention to two of them, which we named, for lack of better titles, Hebraism and Hellenism. These words were chosen, not because of any exact historical accuracy, for, indeed, as we have seen, the Greek and Hebrew lines continually cross. Yet, on the whole, the names may stand. The name Hebraism stands on the one hand for the rough prophetic insistence upon conscience, and the claim of truth and righteousness for their own sakes, somewhat at the expense of form and beauty. Hellenism, on the other hand, stands for the Greek appeal to intelligence and poise, its appreciation of beauty and form, and its emphasis upon these rather than upon shaggy righteousness. In the middle and later Victorian period the protagonists of these two tendencies were Thomas

Carlyle and Matthew Arnold. The aim of the present chapter is to give some sort of sketch of the life and mind of these two men, which may serve as an introduction to the criticism of their message and point of view. All literary and other criticism must in the last analysis be personal. A man's message, and even his style, are part of his manhood; and the characteristics of that manhood must enter into any understanding of them. We shall accordingly proceed to this sketch with the sole object of presenting these personalities as vividly as possible, before we hear them speak.

Of Thomas Carlyle a vast amount has been written, and the task of anyone who would epitomize the intellectual and spiritual stir which he has caused during the last hundred years is indeed a heavy one. There is no question whatever as to his dominating influence. It has been said of late years that this is on the wane, and those who love him not have shown signs of preparing baked meats for his funeral. To them I would say one word, quoting it from the excellent advice of *The Letters of a Merchant to his Son:* "The first requisite for a successful funeral is a willing corpse." Now Carlyle is anything but willing. The message which he preached with such per-

sistency in his lifetime may indeed have its ebb and flow of public interest, like all other messages. Yet it has so great and vital a hold upon the essential things, that it bears all the appearance of making itself inevitable as an integral part of the world's future thought.

It is interesting to remember, in this connection, that in 1848 Emerson remarked that one of the three things which had most struck him in his visit to Europe was the conversation of Thomas Carlyle. At a later time he uttered the prophecy: "You shall wear your crown at the Pan-Saxon games, with no equal or approaching competitor in sight, well earned by genius and exhaustive labor, and with nations for your pupils."

Before we come to personal notes in regard to the biography of Carlyle it will be well to indicate something about the order in which his books may best be read. Many of those who have touched him and then forsaken him, have, as it seems to me, entered the domain by the wrong gateway. There are some of his books which must strike a novice with a sense of hopeless bewilderment, and some readers have been unfortunate enough to start with these. It would be well for all who wish to know him to begin with

his *Essays*, of which there are seven volumes, and to choose from them the essays upon subjects which are already more or less familiar. Added to these might be a selection of his letters, especially some of those to Emerson and Stirling. After that introduction I would suggest the four great central works, *Heroes and Hero Worship*, *Past and Present*, *Sartor Resartus*, and *The French Revolution*. Not until these have been read, but immediately following them, should come *The Letters of Cromwell*, in which he recreated the figure of that great English statesman and hero, rescuing it not so much from oblivion but from deep and virulent misunderstanding. Finally, his *Life of Frederick the Great*, in ten volumes, might well come as the last stage of this journey. The three last-mentioned books require the reading of history along with them. The French Revolution tells its tale in flame-pictures and requires for its elucidation some such work as that of Alison or Gardiner. The *Life of Frederick the Great* needs to be supplemented by other lives and contemporary histories, for it is probable that no work of Carlyle's was less unbiased and more unreliable. *Sartor Resartus* is for many of us the central point of all his effort, and I would suggest that along with it

there should always be read Longfellow's *Hyperion*, together with Carlyle's *Essays* upon Richter and Goethe and Richter's own *Flower, Fruit and Thorn Pieces*, which is to be had in excellent translation.

Before we proceed further we may as well face the question of his style. Much has been said in criticism of it, and much of what has been said is just. It is on the whole as bad a style as it could possibly be. Matthew Arnold gives us the advice to "flee Carlylese as you would flee the devil." Dr. James Denney is said to have announced to his class a similar sentiment. He quoted Carlyle, saying that, "sarcasm is the language of the devil," and added in a curious aside, "and one might almost say it is Carlyle's mother tongue." One does not wonder at these extreme statements, for Carlylese has been a sad plague to the English language. Yet there is another side to this. Justin McCarthy has well said that "no tongue is eloquent save in its own language, and that this strange language which he has made for himself does really appear to be the native tongue of Carlyle's powerful and melancholy eloquence." A man's style ought to be his natural expression. It is not like his clothes, a thing which can be put

on, or laid aside, or changed at pleasure. It is a man's skin rather than his clothes, through which nature expresses him to his fellows: and so long as it is his natural expression, however much we may regret its eccentricity or its violence, we must accept it, and may even come in a sense to be grateful for it. When one considers the things Carlyle had to say and the passionate spirit with which he uttered them, it is difficult to admit that any other style than that which he adopted would have been so appropriate or so effective.

As to his biography, there is little to tell that is of outward or picturesque interest. I can recollect many years ago, when I was a young lad working in the Australian bush, an evening on which, after darkness fell, I found myself with a considerable company of bush hands in a log cabin, deep in the heart of New South Wales. We were sitting, smoking our pipes by the firelight, when there broke in upon the conversation a strident voice, and we discovered an old man, with cheeks deeply furrowed and hair shaggy and grizzled, leaning upon the top of his staff, back in the shadows. When the firelight shone for a moment upon his face, the black eyes flashed with a fearsome kind of flame, and there came from him a

stream of language whose violence surpassed anything which I have ever heard before or since. He had something to say both on general and local topics, and everything that he said came forth white-hot, absolutely unrepeatable, stinging and burning, and leaving a scar upon the memory. After having released a considerable number of such fiery sentiments he arose and disappeared in the outer darkness, and men whispered that he was one of the Carlyles. Whether that rumor was true or not I do not know, but I shall never forget his figure, nor his resemblance, both in body and in mind, to the Sage of Chelsea.

The family seems to have been originally of English origin, and there is word of a Sir John Carlyle who was created Lord Carlyle of Torthorwald, for a defeat he had given the English at Annan. At the end of the eighteenth century, however, the aristocratic associations of the family had disappeared. Thomas Carlyle was born in a very humble house in Ecclefechan, a village in Annandale, built of stone and giving to the stranger the impression of an extreme dullness and austerity. His father, like the father of Socrates, was a stone mason, and had built the house with his own hands. He must have been a very

remarkable man. The best year of his fortunes brought him as the reward of his toil the sum of £100: and yet he not only fed and clothed but educated a large family, who inherited the habit of plain living and high thinking. For a time the child was sent to school at Annan. It was a very miserable time, which he describes in a famous passage in *Sartor Resartus*. His mother had extracted from him a promise that he would not fight or return a blow, and I should not wonder if this has something to do with the ferocity that has been so much remarked in his later point of view. When a child is bullied and forbidden to defend himself, the dumb and inactive misery burns inward and creates just such a habit of mind as we see in Carlyle. It stood him indeed in good stead, and long afterwards we find him saying, "I am a stubborn dog, and evil fortune shall not break my heart, nor bend it either." Yet there is always danger in suppressing strong feelings in such a nature, and I for one cannot help wishing that his mother's reading of Christianity had found some place for the fighting spirit upon suitable occasions.

The time came when the youth was ready for college. One can see the group of aspirants for

education walking the hundred miles to Edinburgh, entertained on the way by hospitable peasants in the villages. Carlyle entered the University, of course with a view to the ministry. Our Scottish universities are not nurseries or hothouses. They profess to be opportunities and no more. Their severe régime offers the finest practical example of the operation of the law of survival of the fittest that is to be had in any land to-day. In consequence, they tend to produce a breed of hard and independent thinkers who have learned young to choose for themselves the path in which they are going to walk, and to resent interference in their journey along that path. The lads lived upon food sent to them from home by the carrier — oatmeal, potatoes, and salt butter forming almost the entire provision. Their laundry was returned by the cart on its southward journey, to be washed at home and sent up with the next supply of food. Those Scottish carriers deserve a sentence *in memoriam* from anyone who mentions them. *Rab and his Friends* has told their story in words whose pathos is undying. They were brave men, great wrestlers with the elements and servants of their fellows, than whom no nobler have enriched the honored memory of

old Scotland. One of them is memorable for his tragic fate on the high moor about the *Devil's Beef Tub*, where he struggled in a blinding storm, until he was overcome, and was found dead in the snow some days afterwards. The sense of duty under whose stern command he fought the infinite odds of the moorland tempest to the bitter end may stand for much that there is in Carlyle, and the mention of it in connection with his early life is not so irrelevant as it may seem. It is incredible to those who have been bred more softly, what can be done, and what has been done, by the youth of Scotland in search of learning. There was an instance in recent years of a fishing-boat that brought three lads from the Hebrides to Glasgow, and lay moored there during the whole of the winter while its occupants attended the classes in the University. They fed upon the provisions which they had brought with them in their boat, returning in the spring for the summer fishing, with university prizes to take the place of their diminished cargo.

The period of Carlyle's life that follows is a particularly trying and sad one. He found the ministry impossible and gave up all thoughts of it. He taught in schools in Annan, Haddington and

Kirkcaldy. In the latter town he met that Margaret Gordon who was the *Blumine* of his *Sartor Resartus*. "Their lips were joined, their two souls like two dewdrops rushed into one — for the first time and the last." This unfortunate attachment both deepened and embittered him. Dyspepsia fastened upon him with heavy torture. He hated teaching and left it off, dabbled for a time with classes in law, read widely in English, French, and German, finally fell into the condition which he describes as "the Everlasting No," and came at one time very near to suicide. The spot is pointed out in Edinburgh, on that broad causeway into which Leith Walk opens out from the narrow throat of the precipitous Leith Street, as a crucial place in Carlyle's career. It is said that he was on his way to drown himself in the Forth, "when at this particular spot the message of the Everlasting Yea struck upon him like the light that blazed upon Saul on the road to Damascus, and he turned back to continue his battle against fate." His own account of this period is that there was in it no object and no rest. There certainly was no brightness of any kind in it, but there was the welding and tempering of a lifelong resolution that there should be no surrender. We

need not go into the details of his changing life that followed. There was Haddon Hill farm with his brother, the marriage to Jane Welsh, and the life, first at Edinburgh in Comely Bank, then at Craigenputtock for the next eight years. Finally there was the well-known house in 9 Cheyne Row, London, of which Professor Masson has given us such a charming picture. There were few incidents of an outward kind in the story. Perhaps the most significant of them were the inaugural address as Lord Rector of Edinburgh University, in which he attained unexpected and very marked success: and the destruction of the first volume of *The French Revolution*. He had lent the manuscript to John Stuart Mill, who had lent it to somebody else, who had left it upon a table for a housemaid to consign to the waste-paper basket. And so the work of years went up in flame. But Carlyle's nature was one which could fly into a fury over the most insignificant trifle and stand like a rock under the most desolating loss. The only record that we have of his view of the ghastly incident was that his first thought concerning it was that of comforting poor Mill. So, with visits from great men and to them, and an enormous correspondence laboriously kept up, the years

went on till his wife died in 1866. She was found in Hyde Park, in the little carriage with which he had provided her, sitting with her hands folded in her lap, quite dead. He himself followed her in 1881.

It was a life that began in fierce opposition and ended in the extreme of worship. It has been said that both of these fed an enormous egotism: and that is not untrue, although it is by no means the only fact to be remembered. He was conscious of his power when everybody else was ignorant of it, and he remained conscious of it when the world joined in the acclaim. But his power was a fact and his consciousness of it was no discredit to him. The first recognition that he received was from America, and the last was from his native Scotland. As to the charge of egotism, we must always remember that a man like Carlyle is filled with the Hebrew prophet's conception that he is the bearer of the authentic message from the Lord. The egotism of such a man is not so much a high opinion of himself personally, as an overwhelming sense of the message which he bears.

As to the fierceness and uncouthness of his manner and the savage violence of his message, a great deal has been made of two facts in his life.

The first is that already referred to, the dyspepsia from which he suffered in acute and aggravated forms. This was begun during the hard, struggling years in Edinburgh when food, and indeed all the conditions of his life, were such as to render it inevitable. When we read of his jangled nerves, of his torment through all manner of noises and his desperate search for noise-proof rooms — when we find him sneering at everybody, and come to realize unwillingly the utter want of tolerance which is everywhere displayed in some of his writings — it is well to remember the physical conditions under which he began his work in Edinburgh while as yet there was no promise of any recompense or betterment. To those who are inclined to speak harshly about him or his tempers, one has only one word to say, but that word is weighty — "Did you ever suffer from dyspepsia?"

The second fact that has been so much dwelt on is what is generally supposed to have been an unhappy married life. We owe our knowledge of this to Mr. James Anthony Froude, that very amazing friend. It may be conceded that in a certain sense Carlyle and his wife were ill-matched, being in some respects too much alike and in others too different. The character of each was

difficult, and their difficulties were greatly aggravated by the circumstances in which they had to live. It may also be conceded that Mrs. Carlyle in some of her utterances is herself responsible for the unfortunate impression that has been made. There are, as one has said, two classes of sufferers. There are those who suffer and are silent, and there are those who suffer and tell. Undoubtedly Mrs. Carlyle was of the latter group. Yet, after all this has been admitted, those who turn to their love letters find themselves ashamed to read such tender familiarities. However much failure there may have been in its expression, there is no question whatever of the genuineness of that great affection. They were noble lovers, although they seem to have been gifted with an almost demoniac power of wounding one another. This is not so very uncommon a case. Many of the difficulties which embitter married life are due not to lack of love but to its exigency: and if love were less its trials would also be less. It is not well to tramp over all this most delicate ground with hobnailed boots. The question of the Carlyles is a puzzling one; but, whatever we may think of them, we know very well indeed what we think of those whose interest in them centres in the record of

their disagreements. The late Lord Guthrie, in his appreciation of 1916, justly branded the vulgarity and impertinent indecency of all this exhibition. It does seem a bitter shame that he who lived with heroes, and more than any other man led his generation into their world, should be cooped up forever in this cackling barnyard of unpleasant gossip. The time will come — indeed it has well-nigh come already — when even the general public will see these things in their true proportions, and all this unfortunate aspect of Carlyle's life will be lost in the larger love which lay at the depths and united these two souls, and in the infinitely larger service which their minds rendered to the thought of their age. It is little wonder that Lord Guthrie should have printed in capitals the testimony of Mr. Froude himself: "When the devil's advocate has said his worst against Carlyle, he leaves a figure still of unblemished integrity, purity, loftiness of purpose, and inflexible resolution to do right, as of a man living consciously under his Maker's eye, and with his thoughts fixed on the account which he would have to render of his talents."

As to the general course of Carlyle's opinions, we can see a very interesting process going on

within him. Politically, he began as a radical and was in considerable sympathy with the Revolution. Afterwards he came to distrust that attitude, and above all longed for rule, and strong rule. It is this which explains his profound admiration for Oliver Cromwell and his sense of the necessity for the autocrat in the commonwealth. In later years this sense of the necessity for strong character and rule grew more and more upon him. When he wrote his *Frederick the Great* he might well have chosen a worthier autocrat, but even the special pleading of that colossal work proves how entirely he was in love with strength and efficiency. In connection with this side of his work, it must also be remembered that in spite of all his brutal plainness of speech to the complaining multitudes, he yet inaugurated and left behind him a long train of reform, including the Factory Acts, and many others. Beneath all his autocratic sentiments he was a sworn and life-long enemy of *laissez-faire*. The passion of his life was duty. He was its willing prophet. Whether its commanding impulse came from the one or from the many, he was its champion against all undutifulness, whether in the tyrant or in the democracy.

In regard to his religion, there is no doubt that from those early days in which he found it impossible to enter the ministry of the Church of Scotland, there was a drift which separated him further and further from the conventional forms of piety and the accepted language of creeds. Yet he presents the astonishing spectacle of one who fights for the spirit of religion, even when the letter is no longer available for him. He is our best representative of Hebraism, although the literalist would exclude him from among the peculiar people of the faith. He stands, as has been said truly of R. L. Stevenson, like a Covenanter in the mist, with his sword in his hand, seeing but a little distance, and quite unable to map out the universe with the certainty of traditional Calvinism. Yet somehow he impresses us as one who all the time is contending valiantly for the faith once delivered to the fathers.

By his critics he has been called everything and supposed to be nothing. By the narrowly orthodox he is counted dangerous, a kind of torpedo loose in the harbor where their vessels lie securely motionless. You note that he has the government stamp upon him, yet you never can tell when he may be coming to blow you up. It has sometimes

been supposed that he was unable ever to get rid of the memory and influence of a dismissed creed. Really the problem is very much more complex and difficult than that; and in such cases as his, this solution, if it be an easy one, is also peculiarly unfair.

Two facts are certain. The first is that he gave up all formal creeds and statements of Christian belief. Out of the mist we hear his cry: "May God enlighten my soul, or take from it this reasoning curiosity." It was said of him by one critic: "He seems to carry on a great aerial battle, no one knows where — and teaches with sublime infallibility, nobody knows what." This clever accusation leads us to the second certainty about Carlyle's religious position. It is quite evident that though he had discarded the letter, yet he retained the essence and spirit of the former faith. There are abundant proofs of this. In the general spirit of his work, in stray expressions here and there, and in restatements of his beliefs about things, we can see the surviving spirit of a faith which somehow is no longer able to express itself as it used to do. There is also a great tenderness, mingled with his undaunted and resolute search for truth. After the

Latter Day Pamphlets he contemplated *An Exodus from Houndsditch*, in which he was to have declared himself against many points in the traditional faith. It was in deference to his father, and the distress which such a pronouncement would have caused to him, that this was never written. One remembers Morley's *Compromise*, that famous plea for laying one's cards upon the table, and for a regardless and full sincerity of utterance, with the curious and apparently illogical exception in favor of one's parents. The *Houndsditch* incident is characteristic of the tenderness which is constantly seen below all the rugged exterior of Carlyle. Often checked in shame, or run off into grotesque endings, it yet persists and breaks out in innumerable passages of the finest pathos. Nor did he need to write *An Exodus from Houndsditch*. He told us enough to show us whither his spirit moved: "First must the dead letter of religion own itself dead, and drop piecemeal into dust, if the living spirit of religion, free from its charnel-house, is to arise among us."

Carlyle was great, not so much as a reasoner, but as an instinctive seer; and it is fortunate for us that he did not state more formally either his dissents or his acceptances in the matter of tradi-

tional creed. The fact is that, for many men who think widely and deeply, formal statements are simply impossible. Either they will profess too much belief and identify themselves with points of view which are very different from their own convictions, or they will profess too little and seem to separate themselves from much which they hold dear and sacred.* Thus, when a man sets himself to formulate his confession of faith, he is apt to cramp the freedom of his thinking by accepting formulae which seem to mean more to his readers than they do actually mean to him. While he is attempting his statement he is apt to perceive this; and in order to avoid all possibility of being a hypocrite, he will express in his stated creed much less than he holds and works from. If you force a man to stand and deliver in the matter of faith, you may secure his purse with the small change of acceptances and denials which he carries about with him, but in his bank at home he will have treasures of which you cannot thus deprive him. The vain effort to express his faith without compromise or insincerity has led in Carlyle's case to countless statements about God,

* Much of this has been stated in my volume on *The Faith of Robert Louis Stevenson*, to whom it applied as much as to Carlyle.

the incarnation, the atonement, immortality and prayer. These are infinitely pathetic, because they so obviously express in other words the very marrow of the creeds, and yet for the sake of sincerity fight shy of language which would make them intelligible to the average believer. It may be permitted us to make a strong plea for this kind of vagueness, in favor of those who find it the only way in which they can express their souls.

Of all the experiments that have been tried in recent years the most incomprehensible seems to be the eagerness of such writers as Haeckel, Blatchford, and many others of their kind, to tell us with such vociferous emphasis what it is that they do *not* believe. For a man's true faith we turn not to such confessions and denials, but to the man himself, his general attitude to life, his power of meeting circumstances, the spirit that emanates from him, and his influence on the minds he dominates. Many men are so passionately eager to be honest that they are in the habit of uttering formal disclaimers of belief, which seem to them to be the result of reasoning out their positions to the last extreme. They cannot help demanding too much from reason, and often they seem to get from it

little or nothing. Their real nobility and greatness of soul are far greater than their reasoning powers, and behind that nobility and greatness there lurk unutterable convictions which are yet the moving forces of their lives.

In the present age this principle applies, not only to great men, but to us all. No doubt each one of us will be judged by our fellows chiefly by our formal utterances, yet the sentence will seldom be just. To take a man's words — his definite and formally expressed creed — and to estimate him by that, is never quite fair. Most men find that they cannot help becoming more or less slaves to their own statements. In building up their little systems in sincerity they strive to be consistent and must suppress much that is very truly in them, although it cannot be exhibited in a definite and reasoned form. Thus it happens that when you force a man to state and formulate his creed, he will very frequently give you less than he is actually working from, and the statement may leave you for a time feeling desolate and impoverished, as one often does feel after an argument about recondite religious questions. There is an immense fund of unconscious Christianity underlying all formal attempts to define

the undefinable, and to express in finite language the infinite that reveals itself within the soul. After all is said, one falls back gratefully upon the passing words of Arthur:

> *The old order changeth, yielding place to new,*
> *And God fulfills himself in many ways,*
> *Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.*

When one turns from Carlyle to Matthew Arnold, the change is great indeed. We pass from Ecclefechan to Laleham and Fox Howe; from the Scottish peasant to the Oxford professor; from Jerusalem to Athens. Following the plan of our introduction to Carlyle, it may be permitted us to suggest an order of reading which may introduce those who do not know his work to Arnold's writings. The poems are familiar. Of the prose writing by far the most important is *Culture and Anarchy*. This, as we shall see in a later lecture, is the work in which he gives us material for judging and understanding all the rest. Along with it may be read *Friendship's Garland*, that delightful, witty, and wayward little volume which has seemed so whimsical and which is yet in many ways so wise. The *Discourses in America* and the *Essays in Criticism* may follow. Then

there are *Celtic Literature* and *Reports on Elementary Schools*, besides the volumes by which he is perhaps most widely known. By his own desire no biography has been published, but the late George Russell edited two volumes of his letters, excellently selected and many of them very intimate. Of him perhaps more than of most it is true that we need to know the man in order to understand his message. The voice that he sent forth was essentially an expression of his personality. The truths by which he lived had been so perfectly assimilated that in order to understand them one must know something of himself; and every principle by which he stood became part of his daily life. As Russell has said in his preface: "His theology, once the subject of some just criticism, seems now a matter of comparatively little moment; for, indeed, his nature was essentially religious. He was loyal to truth as he knew it, loved the light and sought it earnestly, and by his daily and hourly practice gave sweet and winning illustration of his own doctrine that conduct is three-fourths of human life."

Matthew Arnold was born on Christmas Eve, 1822. He was the son of Thomas Arnold, Headmaster of Laleham School, and afterwards of

Rugby. In 1851 he was appointed to an inspectorship of schools whose duties he performed for many years, and in 1857 he received the appointment of Professor of Poetry in Oxford. He is conspicuous among men of letters for the serenity and perfect happiness of his life at home. His marriage was an ideal one, and the *Letters* bear abundant testimony to the tenderness and beauty of his family life. Beyond a few journeys on the continent of Europe (which, however, counted for a great deal) and his part in the educational controversies of the time, his life was uneventful. He died in Liverpool in 1888.

His was one of the happiest, healthiest, and most natural of lives. His writings have given to some an impression of superciliousness, and the newspaper comments upon his appearances in America have produced many excellent after-dinner tales. These, however, are for the unknowing. Those who know him well interpret him very differently, and nothing is more striking than the way in which his friends seem unable to avoid a constant relapse into expressions of personal affection as they write about him and discuss his work. The following extract from an estimate of his *Letters* reveals him to us in a singularly beautiful

and winsome light: "The peculiar charm of these lies in their perfect naturalness. They are in a word himself; and there can be no higher praise. A more genuinely amiable man never lived. Nature had given him a sunny temperament, quick sympathy and inexhaustible fun. But something more than nature must have gone to make his constant unselfishness, his manly endurance of adverse fate, his buoyancy in breasting difficulties, his unremitting solicitude for the welfare and enjoyment of those who stood nearest to his heart. Self-denial was the law of his life, yet the word never crossed his lips. He revelled in doing kindness, never more than when the recipient was a little child or an over-worked schoolmistress, or a struggling author. . . . The magnificent serenity of his demeanor, concealed from the world, but never from his friends, his boyish appreciation of kindness, of admiration, of courteous attention."

His character seems to have been a most charming complex, which is perhaps illustrated best by physical counterparts — for men's spiritual characteristics do incarnate themselves in corresponding preferences, delights, and aversions, as they walk upon the earth. In his case the most striking and significant of these appears to have been

a delight in full streams of water. His favorite recreation was fishing, but apart from that we are constantly meeting with this pleasure in flooded streams, and abundant things in general. "The only vexing element to me in Italy is the meagerness of the rivers there:" and he notes particularly the Rapido as an exception to this rule — a stream which evidently had been in flood when he passed it — adding, "How he manages it I cannot imagine." All his senses and sense impressions were full and strong. He had a keen delight in all things of the garden, the growth of plants, the life of trees; he loved to penetrate into the secrecies of nature, with no *arrière pensée* of occult significance, but simply with a frank delight in the opulence of her quiet life. He describes himself in one of his letters as in "tearing spirits simply from the weather," and many of us can well understand what he means by that.

It is rare to find fastidiousness and delicacy of taste combined with delight in full draughts of life. Often the fisherman and the hunter, rejoicing in streams and woods, become indifferent to what other men count essential comforts and the daintiness of life's detail. Arnold preserved a most exacting fastidiousness which made him

a lover of all clean things, such as fine editions of books, and old houses with the charm of beautiful architecture. This showed itself in his characteristic repulsion from all things second rate, whether material or spiritual. The combination of these two characteristics, full-bloodedness on the one hand and delicate fastidiousness on the other, is indeed a rare gift. One can see how the mingled taste gratified itself in the intense love of children and of intimate friends, and in a lifelong and very tender sense of the companionship of favorite animals. His poems on *Geist* the dachshund, and even on *Poor Matthias* the canary bird, revealed this characteristic in an unusually intense degree. The resultant character was one of singular fearlessness and candor that was completely independent alike of praise and of blame, although by no means indifferent to them. For the opinion of strangers and the general public he seems to have had no regard whatever, but his friendship with those whom he chose for his intimates was always to him a priceless treasure to be guarded with the utmost care.

Thus he lived through a long period of hard and exhausting labor, knowing perfectly well that it was not the task he was born for, and that it

was depriving him of time and opportunity in which he might have done his own peculiar and delightful work. Yet he was great enough to teach his spirit to accept the work that had to be done. It is very delightful to read his own account of his buoyancy, in which one feels also the constant element of fastidiousness and reticence. In 1867 he writes: "I feel no older, and that is one great benefit of going on reading and thinking — one's sense of a freshness and newness in things remains." On the death of Thackeray he writes to his mother: "I have ripened and am ripening so slowly that I should be glad of as much time as possible. Yet I feel, I rejoice to say, an inward spring which seems more and more to gain strength and to promise to resist outward shocks. . . . But of this inward spring one must not talk for it does not like being talked about, and threatens to depart if one will not leave it in mystery."

As to his teaching, that will form the subject of a future lecture. It is extremely amusing and even pathetic to notice how, being misunderstood from the beginning, it was prejudged during his lifetime. Only in certain quarters was it realized how very great a man was here speaking to

his country and the world, and how great a message he had to deliver. There were amusing elements in the situation. His message could not possibly have been intelligible to many of those who were the first to criticize it, for the simple reason that those things that presented difficulty to him had never struck them as difficult at all, and that they had not the faintest idea that a man could express religion in any other formulae than their own. There is a story told of a certain conference of ministers, in a town where he was about to lecture, which is said to have sent out an injunction to all the faithful of their communion to spend twice as much time upon the reading of the Scriptures as they devoted to the reading of Mr. Matthew Arnold. His commentary upon this is characteristic, for he simply remarks that in the opinion of these brethren Mr. Matthew Arnold's work appears to be about twice as powerful, in its probable influence upon the mind, as the Scriptures.

Such misunderstandings were inevitable at the time, but it was equally inevitable that the judgment of the future should alter and amend them. There is no question that he took his work to be intensely religious, however difficult it may have

been for his contemporaries to believe that or to understand it. He conceived himself as carrying on the work that his father had so splendidly done in England. He was well aware that the letter of religion was not the same as it had been in a previous time, but he claimed with the utmost earnestness that the spirit remained the same. Successive generations will judge him in the light of history and the wide perspectives of ancient and modern development in religious thought. It is probable that they will say of him, as of Carlyle, that when he comes to state his faith in formal sentences he habitually understates it. That, as we have seen already, may be taken as inevitable in all cases where literary men, detached from the predispositions of this or that particular creed, seek to give an exact account of the faith that is in them. Yet we may venture to prophesy that while some of the thing that he has given us will pass away, and while many of his denials will be read by the future rather as protests than as statements of belief, the essential language of his teaching will remain as a rich heritage for all time to come. Quoting an utterance of Margaret Fuller's, published in 1853, he affords us a little glance of insight that is very significant. "Cultivate a spirit

of prayer," she says. "I don't mean agitation and excitement, but a deep desire for truth, purity, and goodness, and you will daily learn how near He is to everyone of us." His comment is "Nothing can be better than that." Again in connection with the death of Forster's father he writes: "However, with them (the pure in heart) one feels — even I feel, whatever delusions they may have wandered in, and whatever impossibilities they may have dreamed of, they shall in some sense or other see God."

The detailed opinions regarding religious matters, by which Matthew Arnold is still best known in certain circles, belong to the controversies of their day and need not concern us much; but the spirit of the man, and the central convictions to which he dedicated his life, expressed in such great teachings as those in which his true message and significance lie, live on and will continue to live. When religious controversy grows meticulous and is diverted into questions of minor interest and importance, men will turn back to those main contentions by which he sought to lead his own generation out from side eddies into the central stream. They will provide a means of escape from vexing confusion and exaggerated

masses of detail, and bring back controversialists to the spirit rather than the letter of religion. They will lead them into a region where the sound and fury of ecclesiastical discussion die away, and are succeeded by a serene and spacious view of life, in which they will be able to conduct their discussions under deeper skies and amid wider horizons.

III

THOMAS CARLYLE

THERE is no author of the nineteenth century whose books are more classical than those of Thomas Carlyle. Borne for a time on the crest of the Hebraistic wave, many people believe that he is now sunk either finally or temporarily into the trough. His volumes are upon everybody's shelves, but it is astonishing how few men and women of our generation study him seriously.

In this chapter it will be useful for us to consider his message under those five points which seem to be cardinal with him. It is fitting that one who out-Calvined Calvin in his almost fatalistic view of the universe, should express his doctrine in this particular number of categories; and every one of the five points links him more or less directly with the great theologian of Geneva.

1. *Sincerity*. The sincerity of Carlyle is the first thing that strikes anyone who reads his work. Whatever else may be said about him, he was obviously out after facts, on the quest of things as they are. He was not indeed a Realist, for he let

loose upon the facts a flaming imagination which transformed them into the likeness of his own ideas. Realism floats its ship under bare poles: Carlyle sent it off under full sails. It may be confessed at once that the sails and the wind were his own; and indeed a man never knows how much he is altering facts by his own way of seeing them and representing them. Still there is no doubt that his intention and desire were to lay the basis of all his work upon the sheer rocks of truth. In order to do this he cultivated a habit of exactness which is very singular and has perhaps never been surpassed. One of his friends tells us that he was so exact upon dates and details that he would exhaustively search in every European library for them. In describing events he even made it a matter of conscience to be able to give the day of the month, the week, the day, and hour, and if possible to add whether there was sunshine or shower at the time.

His *Sartor Resartus* is one continuous plea for sincerity. He believes that he lives in "an epoch when puffery and quackery have reached a height unexampled in the annals of mankind." Accordingly he writes this great book in protest. It is, in his whimsical language, a new philosophy of

clothes, in which clothes stand for the coverings, appearances, and shams which men present to their fellows, and with which they conceal their real selves. From first to last insincerity was his *bête noire*, both in speech and deed. He could never bring himself to write a novel, and his verse has never attained to any high place in poetry. His genius was not a genius for invention but for facts, and he revelled in long lists of them comparable at times to those of Walt Whitman. This statement contrasts strangely with our former assertion that he was rather a seer than a reasoner; but such are the contradictions and strange combinations within the mind of man. The seer is frequently vague about the details of facts, and interested only in his search for abstract truths. It is characteristic of Carlyle that he combined idea and detail to a degree in which they are very rarely found together. He was ashamed even of his lectures, calling them a mixture of prophecy and play-acting, and forgetting that sometimes the stage may reach a deeper truth than the statistical bureau. He greatly disliked journalism, dreading its temptations to insincerity; and all manner of advertising, like the big pasteboard hat with which he makes such play, was abomination to him.

Generally speaking, he had a contempt for all quick methods of success, and the contempts of Carlyle were inclusive and sweeping. The frankness of his letters and journals must have struck all their readers; and his criticisms of his age and country are embittered more by such traces of insincerity as he finds in them than by anything else. To a friend he complained that London bricks crumble in sixty years, while Etruscan pottery (which also is merely baked clay, but rightly baked) has lasted three thousand years and remains still strong. In a similar spirit he attacks the building of our modern cities, accusing Londoners of their brick-and-a-half walls, and their floors which make no allowance for dancing, while their ancestors built houses that would last through the time of their latest posterity.

All this is highly attractive to certain minds, and a very necessary corrective to much that is only too characteristic of the present overcrowded and hurried time. It is questionable if any age has afforded larger opportunities for shallow and uninformed work than the present. Yet one feels that truth needs more patience than Carlyle gives it. It is shy and subtle, and you cannot bully it or hustle it with any good results. You may in-

deed proclaim long lists of facts, but these are not the whole truth. Each truth of history has its own atmosphere, which lends, by the very fact of indistinctness, a certain characteristic haze of beauty, or of pathos, or of wistfulness; and this ought also to be included when we speak of the truth of any situation. The difficulty with so violent a critic as Carlyle is that he brings his own atmosphere, and plays the lights of his own fiery mind upon facts to which these are foreign, and in doing so he often unconsciously changes the facts themselves.

In religion this militant spirit of sincerity took the form of a violent hatred and fear of cant. Of no other field are his own words so accurate a description. "The shows of Things continually withstand him: only by victoriously penetrating to the Things themselves can we find Peace and a Stronghold." Thus he is especially at war against what he calls Church Clothes. We know how naturally and almost inevitably we come to our religious life adorned with certain conventional and accredited garments of the spirit and the mind. We get our souls into the religious attitude, so to speak, and we dress in our Sunday garments, and having done this we have ceased to be ourselves.

Of those who, apart from the daily life altogether, assume the garments and attitude of faith, and trust to that for their salvation, he says that they "are stealing into heaven by the modern method of sticking ostrich-like your head into fallacies on earth." It is evident how easily such words might be, as indeed they were, misinterpreted to his disadvantage. Carlyle hated unbelief and scepticism of all kinds, yet he would not employ as a weapon against it formularies which seemed to him to savor of insincerity; and so we have the strange phenomenon of a man fighting scepticism without a creed. A most touching instance of this is his passionate longing for immortality after the death of his wife, while he yet refused and thrust away from him any solacing means of attaining to a faith in it which seemed to him to be superstitious.

2. *Seriousness.* Carlyle's mission was not so much to communicate new ideas to the world as to call it to serious thinking and living, to take itself and the universe seriously. The first requisite for seriousness of Carlyle's sort was silence, and everybody knows the gibe that he preached the doctrine of silence in forty volumes of eloquent English prose. "Hold thy tongue for one

day," he tells us, "on the morrow how much clearer are thy purposes and duties." It is interesting to compare with this loud demand for silence the words of a Japanese gentleman, Mr. Neesima: "Silence is one of the virtues. There is much safety in silence. Wise men never talk very much: as our mouth and tongue were given to use for good purposes, use them for good purposes. Vain and senseless talking often injures our reputation and causes us to lose our manhood. There is something noble and secure in silence. Silence is a manly forbearance. A man of silence is a blessing to a family or to a society. Silence ought by no means to be combined with a bitter countenance but with a cheerful countenance. Vain talking often disturbs affairs in a family or in society, but silence heals it." There is also *Le Silence*, that unique and famous essay of M. Maeterlinck, in *Le Trésor des Humbles*. We have a whole literature of silence, partly written and partly waiting to be written; and it will probably turn out in the end to be one of the most important departments of speech. There is a tale of a friend of Sir Walter Scott's who used to say that, "over a bottle, talking interrupts conversation"; and even without the bottle there was wisdom in

the saying. As the ages grow noisier with great swelling words and ever more stunning eloquence, there will be those who become more and more homesick for a quiet place in which their souls may live and be sane.

Carlyle's picture of man, chattering between the two silences of the stars above him and the graves below, leads us to the consciousness of those immensities and eternities of which he was ever so seriously aware. The heavens and the earth are for him the true time-vesture of the Eternal. They are also the Shekinah, for in time and upon the earth it is forever true that no man can see the face of God. Yet when silence has fallen upon the spirit and it has begun to realize the vast stretches both of space and time within which it lives, it cannot but feel that it has seen the sweeping folds of the vesture of the eternal God as He passed by. This reverent sense of the vastness that surrounds our life is a very human thought, echoed by the familiar prayer of the Breton mariner: "My God, help me; Thy sea is so great and my barque so small." It is familiar to all who have much converse with the greater forces of nature and the silences of the sea or the waste places of the land.

The tendency of modern science has often been to dwarf the individual man by the ever-increasing immensity of the universe it reveals. As astronomy has flung out further and further its incredible distances and magnified the sizes of the worlds, man has seemed to many to shrink into a mere speck of star-dust, and to become wholly insignificant. It was not so with Carlyle. The human person who stood between the two silences of the graves and the stars was for him a mystery fitted to match that of the immensities and the eternities. "The mystery of a Person, indeed, is ever divine to him who has a sense for the godlike." He refuses to judge this mystery by its clothes, either of official bank-paper, registering his value in money, or of official state-paper, registering it in political influence. He insists that we must look into the man himself; and "discern it may be in this or the other dread potentate a more or less incompetent digestive apparatus: yet also an inscrutable venerable Mystery, in the meanest Tinker that sees with eyes."

A Person, rescued from the belittling power of material science, finds within himself, most evident of all, a sense of destiny and a stern morality.

Conscience keeps him great, and insists upon the importance and the reality of right and wrong. There is no trick of modern times against which Carlyle fulminates more fearsomely than that of attempting to whittle down moral distinctions or to explain them away. A conversation is related by Bishop Wilberforce as having taken place at a dinner party in 1847, to the following effect. "Carlyle was very great. Monckton Milnes drew him out. Milnes began the young man's cant of the present day — the barbarity and wickedness of capital punishment; that, after all, we could not be sure whether others were wicked, et cetera. Carlyle broke out on him with — 'None of your Heaven and Hell Amalgamation Companies for me. We do know what is wickedness. I know wicked men, men whom *I would not live with*; men whom under some conceivable circumstances I would kill, or they should kill me. No, Milnes, there's no truth or greatness in all that. It's just poor, miserable littleness.'"

There is something immensely bracing in this attitude to morals. No doubt it is the sort of thing which has been stigmatized as sound and fury by those who do not like it, but the striking words of a Canadian writer are surely relevant

here, "May heaven keep up our supply of such furies, lest by too much calm and too much thoughtfulness the nerve of our commonwealth be paralyzed."

He hated trifling. No reader will ever forget Teufelsdröckh's experience of aesthetic teas, or the Queen's box of comforts in *The French Revolution*. Indeed that Revolution is for Carlyle all summed up in a sentence. It is the fate of frivolousness. His seriousness led him further afield, for under the category of trifling he included materialism and pleasure-loving and atheism of every kind, and indeed all shallow views of life. On the one hand he damned the game laws of the rich aristocracy, and on the other hand the devotion of the middle classes to merely economic and mechanical ends. Still more remarkable is his application of the same principle to material science. Very truly he asserted that it was not fit to satisfy man's need: but it is a striking example of his attitude on this point that he tossed off Darwinism, which was making so great a stir in his time, with an epigram. "I have no patience whatever with these gorilla damnifications of humanity." It is probably in regard to this attitude to science that the most serious criticism of

Carlyle will always be made. Many even of his admirers will confess that there is justice in Herbert Spencer's rejoinder, when he asks with what reason a man could keep on insisting upon the laws of this universe and our obligation to respect them, yet direct his ceaseless scorn upon those patient thinkers who were devoting their lives to finding out what these laws are.

3. *The Individual.* Carlyle's age as he saw it was one which tended towards abstract theories and massed groups. Perhaps the most characteristic phenomenon of the last fifty years has been the transference of popular interest from individual to group problems. In Carlyle's earlier days no one had heard of the psychology of crowds. The idea of the organization of charity, benevolence, and other work was only in its infancy. Political and economic science also was a newcomer. Adam Smith may be said to have begun it, and its intricate ramifications, in whose mazes so many of us are lost to-day, were altogether unknown. It was inevitable that this spirit should succeed the old individualism as the population of cities increased and the problems of modern life became more and more complex. Accordingly there is no feature of the Victorian time

more characteristic or more striking than the enormous influx of committees, organizations, companies, and parties, which propose to manage on a larger and more public scale the various businesses which previously were individually conducted. Carlyle stood up in protest against the whole movement. He believed that by the habit of dealing with classes and masses of men we get out of touch with reality, and soon lose ourselves in the unreal verbiage of mere abstraction. It was against all this sort of thing that he rebelled so vigorously in his individual studies of *Heroes*, his lives of Cromwell and of Frederick, and much else that he wrote. History, in Carlyle's understanding of it, is the essence of innumerable biographies. "Great men are the inspired texts of that divine book of revelation which we name history." Mrs. Carlyle has told us that "Instead of boiling up individuals into the species" she "would draw a chalk circle around every individuality," and on this point at least she and her husband were entirely at one. That was precisely what he did. Frederick, Cromwell, Mirabeau, Goethe, Danton — he has set up statues of them all. It has been well said that his historical writings make the men and women of the past stand

out with stereoscopic detachment. Nothing could be better than that as a description of his way of writing about people. Nay more, he was so impressed with the individualities of men that it would almost seem as if he went upon the principle that, when we meet a person of great force of character, we should take him on trust.

It is a very ancient question, whether the individual develops the race or the race develops the individual. It is the old puzzle as to whether the oak or the acorn comes first. Carlyle's view is a notable instance of his fondness for the concrete in all things. Facts and not theories were the game which he hunted. In one aspect of it, his whole life-work may be said to have been a long protest against the spirit of the age which tended to submerge individualism. It may even be said that he had little faith in the progress of the race as such. He saw at all periods of human history great individuals standing out unique, and the roll of them does not seem to be in any continuous sense progressive. Plato, Dante, Luther, Shakespeare, Lincoln — as we go on through the list we find a wider sphere of ideas encircling each, yet the ancient personalities stand out as clearly marked as the late ones. This constant passion for in-

dividuality was one of the most characteristic habits of Carlyle's mind. Like much else of his, it is a great half truth. He did well to call back large numbers of his contemporaries, from abstractions which they could not understand or manage, to a painstaking and conscientious dealing with individual facts which were more within their reach. Yet, as a comprehensive theory of life, Carlyle's individualism undoubtedly lacks balance. You cannot fully know the greatest or the most detached individual without knowing also the forces of public opinion and of organized human endeavor which were characteristic of his times.

4. *Strength.* The worship of strength is as old as the race. Among barbarians it is notoriously manifest, and at the beginnings of all civilizations there lies a time when the strong man, in the might of his hand or brain, conquers his weaker neighbor. In the Old Testament, Samson, both by his success and by his failure, is a good example of this tendency to exalt strength in wild and rough times. Even the Greeks, in spite of all their sense of balance and moderation, kept a very high place in their hearts for their beloved Herakles and his adventures. The rough pagan story

of Beowulf, and the exquisite Christian one of Christopherus alike show how great the appeal has been to the spirit of man in all the ages.

In Carlyle it was developed in a quite extraordinary degree. He himself was by nature a spirit strong and rugged and robust. He was a Scotsman, and old Macklin used to say that there was a geography in humor. Carlyle's sardonic humor was indeed characteristically Scottish. It has been said of Dr. Chalmers that in him one saw "the Scotch thistle valiantly doing duty as the rose of Sharon." In Carlyle you have the Scotch thistle simply as the thistle. For want of gentleness, the humor is apt to seem brutal, and the sense of brutality infects the message itself. Consequently, this prophet seems too often to be treating those whom he addresses, as enemies, and forcing them to accept unpalatable truths. Now it has been well said that two things are necessary for the making of a prophet. One is that he should believe in his message, and the other that he should believe in the normal acceptability of his message. Carlyle has the first of these two beliefs in exceptional intensity, but he is utterly lacking in the second of them. He spent his life in vehemently sending forth a mes-

sage in which he believed with all his heart, among forty millions of people whom he characterized as "mostly fools."

The most obvious, although by no means the truest illustration of his worship of strength is found in his violent hatreds and contempts, and his perpetual rush of strong language. It is very curious to see this devoted disciple of Goethe admiring his master to the utmost limit of admiration, not only for his beauty but for his balance and healthiness of mind. For, unlike Goethe, our Scottish Herakles was to find himself burning and raging in his Nessus shirt. This is indeed the characteristic disease of Herakles. The strong man is always more hardly beset by the demands for service than the weak man is, and the penalty for great strength is often the greater suffering.

Yet this was no mere personal characteristic of Carlyle. It entered deep into his theory of the universe, which for him was never a republic but always a monarchy, nay, the most autocratic kind of empire. His ultra-Calvinistic fatalism was directed towards no blind fate, but towards a mysterious will which was in the strictest sense all-powerful. Yet the effect of this sense of the

majesty and might of God was not to crush man into insignificance, as has so often been the case. God the Almighty has taken man into partnership, and so man also can and ought to be strong. "The painfulest feeling is that of your own feebleness," Carlyle tells us, and even when all things seem to drive him to the wall he draws himself up and flings back his defiance in the name of God. "The Everlasting No had said: 'Behold, thou art fatherless, outcast, and the Universe is mine (the Devil's)'; to which my whole Me now made answer: 'I am not thine, but Free, and forever hate thee!'"

So we come to the famous and much contested ground of his advocacy of the doctrine that might is right. There is much which apparently justifies that view of Carlyle, though it must be definitely remembered that he not only denied it in so many words, but actually thought in his extreme old age of writing a book in self-defence against it as an unjust accusation. Certainly this may be said without fear of contradiction, that Carlyle never did say, nor could be conceived by any one as saying, that that which happens to be strongest for the moment is therefore necessarily right. The moment is no criterion for ulti-

mate values, and at the worst his doctrine must always be qualified by the assertion that he is the advocate of that which will prove strongest in the end, and not for the hour. Now he believed vehemently and constantly that the ultimate strength is also righteousness. There was a beautiful prayer of the early Christian Church, "Oh God, we thank Thee most of all that Thou art mighty," and Carlyle would entirely have agreed with the spirit of that prayer. It is true that he was not always fortunate in his selection of particular examples, and that he was sometimes carried away into the glorification of a thoroughly unsound character. This is most notably the case in regard to Frederick the Great. Which of his readers can forget the passage in *Sartor Resartus* where he describes Teufelsdröckh's "father" Andreas? Andreas the sentinel boasts that the great Frederick once spoke to him, and goes on to tell the story. The only words that we have on record of Frederick's conversation with Andreas are "Schweig Hund!" But Andreas adds in a glow of reverence, "There is what I call a king."

While it is true that he was sometimes carried off by the sense of mere greatness, yet it remains also true that for Carlyle the real "king" was the

"canning" one, the man that can. To be able, competent and adequate to life and to its task, that is for Carlyle the indefeasible badge of royalty. No matter how the king be dressed, whether in royal robes or in the plainest homespun, he who is master of his own situation is indeed a king and ought to receive homage. There are few who will deny the principle, although many may object to the examples which he took to illustrate it. A high authority has written: "If Carlyle made a scoundrel or a brute into a hero it was because the supposed hero was a creature of his own imagination." He passionately insisted that, in the long run, righteousness would prove the mightiest force in the universe, and he vehemently repudiated the charge that he maintained the doctrine of "might is right." In principle he never departed from the views expressed in his essay on *Chartism*, where he says of conquest that it "never yet went by brute force and compulsion; conquest of that kind does not endure. Let us know, therefore, that the Good alone is deathless and victorious."

This is an all-important matter for the understanding of Carlyle. It explains much of the bitter opposition with which he met. In his day there was a great deal of philanthropy, the child of sen-

timent without common sense, which tended only to produce a race of parasites. This, and all other kinds of valetudinarianism, Carlyle could not bear. Like Robert Louis Stevenson after him, he had very little patience with the weak brother. It is true that as age grows upon us and we know our own weaknesses more perfectly, we are apt to become more gentle in our judgments towards that unfortunate relation. Yet, it is not always a wiser nor a more useful attitude. The weak brother has a horrible tendency to use his weakness as an Indian beggar uses his running sore, as a plea for charity and a kind of legal title to remain weak and useless. Very often laziness is at the root of weakness. Often it is simply a refusal to bear the burdens and face the battles of life, as men no stronger than himself are doing all around him. Towards such an attitude it would be difficult to find any severity too great, and there is much to justify the sweeping impatience of Carlyle with such persons and the institutions and sentiments which support them.

Similarly, he objects to the use of rewards and punishments as motives for conduct, and insists upon duty for duty's sake. There is much that can be said against such a proposition. After all,

human nature is much more complex than the mere moralist would make it, and one cannot see why a background of reward and punishment should be inherently immoral. Will you not achieve a better universe by letting all the human forces play in it freely, than by confining it to this or that single and severe element? At the same time there can be no doubt that poor human nature is often so greedy of rewards and so tender of its own feelings that it may cultivate an imitation of morality which has very little of virtue in it at all. In such cases morality is indistinguishable from greed and self-protection, and when we have debased morality so far as that we have certainly done a serious injury to human life. In many of the institutions of his time Carlyle saw a danger of this sort, and with his usual unflinching zeal he protested against it. Examples of this protest will be found in much that he has said in connection with workhouses and model prisons, the extension of the franchise, the Irish question as it was in his day, and the condition of emancipated negroes. It is hardly worth while to linger over the details of such contentions now. The principle for which he strove is the main thing, and that is clear enough.

This leads on to another point. Carlyle saw countless persons placed and upheld in positions for which they were unfit, on the plea either of their personal liberty or of their personal necessity. As to personal liberty, he had no patience with the idea that any man is free to do what he likes, apart from all consideration of the value or danger of the deed to the general well-being. Looking around him upon the world, he pronounced that such liberty is often fatal to men as they are, because they are not competent to use it. He demanded that the tools should be given to those who can use them, and that it is insanity to put them into the hands of those who cannot. Of course, it is easily answered that the progress alike of government and civilization has often used the policy of trusting men and nations with powers beyond their present capacity. Give the tools to those who cannot use them as yet, and they will learn to use them. Trust men with positions and with powers for which they are eminently unfit, and they will become fit through their sense of responsibility. That is all very well so long as one remembers that there is always the chance of their cutting their own or other people's jugular veins before they learn how to use the tools. To a cer-

tain extent it is a principle that may be applied and will prove valuable: but it must be remembered also that there are very narrow limits within which it is safe, and that all idealists of the liberal school will be tempted to ignore these limits in favor of a dangerous and ill-founded optimism.

Thus was Carlyle led to embrace and advocate a kind of exalted imperialism, spiritual rather than political. He saw all round him great numbers of ineffective bunglers who are upheld by society in positions for which they are not fit, or who are pushing in to attempt great tasks to which they are not called. He protested against the iniquity of such persons being thus upheld in places too high for them, whether it be in virtue of birth, or rank, or wealth, or popularity. His vision of a true imperialism was that of a world in which all tasks are given to those only who are capable of performing them. It is in this sense that he pronounces strong government to be the greatest necessity for man, and that our first duty is surrender to that which is higher than we. "Obedience is our universal duty and destiny; wherein whoso will not bend must break. Were your superiors worthy to govern, and you worthy

to obey, reverence for them were even your only possible freedom. Whoso cannot obey cannot be free, still less bear rule: he that is the inferior of nothing can be the superior of nothing, the equal of nothing."

This is indeed Hebraism at its very center. In the whole of it one hears the voice of the prophet of Jehovah, and there is no lack of texts that will most emphatically support it. The theory of life to which it leads would indeed be a bleak and rugged one if it were not toned down and completed by other truths which it was given to the Greek genius to supply. Yet this is fundamental and man can never escape from it. The dream of a day when obedience shall be superannuated and strong rule abolished, is not only a vain but a most mischievous dream. Duty for duty's sake is one-sided teaching, and it is not Christ's; yet it is the safest and the cleanest of all one-sided doctrines. Duty for its own sake is infinitely better than anything else for its own sake, as a source of that fundamental strength without which moral life must be ever in danger.

It has become the fashion in these latter days to connect Carlyle's name with the Great War, and to accuse him of importing much Prussianism

into English thought. This is both true and false. The Prussian error, which led to such lamentable disasters in recent years, was not its effectiveness or its thoroughness, but the fact that it had allowed these virtues to run wild. In themselves they were not only excellent: they supplied elements which it would have been well for us all to have learned better than we did. The trouble was that in the selection of her rulers and of her ideals Prussia did not exercise the same admirable qualities which she exercised along other lines. You may follow a bad ideal all the way to destruction, and in that following you may find that you have to put forth great strenuousness, self-denial, and nobilities of many sorts. The nobilities remain noble, though their direction may be hideously bad. It may be said without fear of contradiction that Carlyle's German heritage was such as to enrich, not impoverish the world, to enlarge and not enslave it. It must also be remembered that the Germany he knew so well was not the Germany that fought the Great War.

5. *Work.* It is hardly necessary to dwell upon work as a doctrine and a practice of Thomas Carlyle. His name recalls it, and the whole universe stands to action when we think of him. In-

deed, for him the universe was one vast labor house. From the range of the furthest stars to the microscopic life within the tiniest clod, he found all things busy continually; and he felt it to be an affront to the universe that one vain little inhabitant of it should lie back in idleness and let the rest labor for him.

As for himself, work was his uncontrollable passion. He would never consent to do anything little, and he never found anything great easy to do. The thoroughness of his literary work is proverbial. He mastered the details when these involved a drudgery that would have killed half a dozen minds less indomitable than his own. For some of his writings he used not hundreds, but tons, of volumes; and, as we have already seen, he set the example to all laborers everywhere, of a workman who never needed to be ashamed. He hated idleness and frivolity of every sort with what one might call a personal bitterness. "I will thank the great God for that He has said, in whatever fearful ways and just wrath against us, idleness shall be no more." Carlyle's passion for labor cannot merely be set down to a habit of diligence and a natural preference for being busy. In the great crises of his life he had found

the moral and spiritual value of labor, and it was through it that he had been saved from despair. The whole of that marvelous chapter, *The Everlasting Yea*, tells the story of a spirit rescued from scepticism by a sense of being the servant of God. He sees the world around him, not as a pleasure-ground for man's amusement, but as a half-created thing still in the making, and flung down at our feet that we may complete it. Thus work, of whatever sort, is for him by no means a mere expedient for earning the daily bread, nor a gymnastic for exercising human faculty; it is a sacrament of communion with the Highest, and the moral condition of being permitted to live at all. For a man himself is it absolutely essential. The wanderer cannot escape from his own shadow. He has himself to reckon with in the end; and so all Byronism is betrayal, and all mere pleasure-loving is dishonesty. The law that a man must ultimately face has not pleasure but duty for its object, not thought but action.

"Venerable to me" says Carlyle, "is the hard Hand; crooked, coarse; wherein notwithstanding lies a cunning virtue, indefeasibly royal, as of the Sceptre of this Planet. Venerable too is the rugged face, all weather-tanned, besoiled,

with its rude intelligence; for it is the face of a Man living manlike. O, but the more venerable for thy rudeness, and even because we must pity as well as love thee! Hardly-entreated Brother! For us was thy back so bent, for us were thy straight limbs and fingers so deformed: thou wert our Conscript, on whom the lot fell, and fighting our battles wert so marred. For in thee too lay a god-created Form, but it was not to be unfolded; encrusted must it stand with the thick adhesions and defacements of Labour: and thy body, like thy soul, was not to know freedom. Yet toil on, toil on: *thou* art in thy duty, be out of it who may; thou toilest for the altogether indispensable, for daily bread. A second man I honour, and still more highly: Him who is seen toiling for the spiritually indispensable; not daily bread, but the bread of Life." . . . The work of man's hands is various. Cities, tilled fields, books, all the many-sided products of the infinite variety of man's labor upon the earth— these are realities of permanent worth. Thus he preaches his gospel of labor. "Cast forth thy act in the ever-living, ever-working universe: it is a seed-grain that cannot die. . . . Produce! Produce! Were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a Product,

produce it, in God's name! 'Tis the utmost thou hast in thee: out with it, then. Up, up! Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might. Work while it is called Today; for the Night cometh, wherein no man can work." Lovers of Robert Louis Stevenson will remember his delightful version of the same doctrine:

For still the Lord is Lord of might;
In deeds, in deeds, He takes delight;
The plough, the spear, the laden barks,
The field, the founded city, marks;
He marks the smiler of the streets,
The singer upon garden seats;
He sees the climber in the rocks:
To him, the shepherd folds his flocks.
For those he loves that underprop
With daily virtues Heaven's top,
And bear the falling sky with ease,
Unfrowning caryatides.
Those he approves that ply the trade,
That rock the child, that wed the maid,
That with weak virtues, weaker hands,
Sow gladness on the peopled lands.
And still with laughter, song and shout,
Spin the great wheel of earth about.

So far as it goes this is noble teaching, and it has been a most bracing doctrine for his age and the ages that follow. Without it man is but a mol-

lusc without backbone or skeleton. With it he advances far distances along the road of manhood. Yet if this were all it would not be enough. There is an unconquerable sense of bleakness in pure Carlylean teaching. Man is made for duty, but not for duty alone; and there is much else that must be added to this magnificent beginning before man can in any sense attain to the fullness of the stature of the son of God. Yet, so far as it goes, let us be profoundly thankful for it: without it any other doctrine would be but words and a vain hope.

IV

MATTHEW ARNOLD

WHEN we come to consider the message of Matthew Arnold, we have stepped across a very wide distance from Thomas Carlyle. Yet, as we shall see, it is astonishing what a large amount they have in common, and indeed how many things they say almost in the same language. This is a noteworthy instance of that continual tendency to cross and blend which we have already observed in considering Hellenism and Hebraism.

It is necessary at the outset to anticipate the central idea for which Matthew Arnold's teaching stands. That central idea is the difference between means and ends, between machinery and the thing which it produces. His life-work as a literary man and teacher was devoted to tracing this distinction and to applying it in all possible directions.

Of course it need not be said that this is no new doctrine or discovery. William Penn had put it in

language which might have been Arnold's own: "It is too common an error, to subvert the Order of Things; by making an End of that which is a Means, and a Means of that which is an End. Religion and Government escape not this mischief. The first is too often made a Means instead of an End; the other an End instead of a Means." Even this, however, is but a modern instance of a distinction which has been perceived from the earliest times, but which has never yet been very thoroughly applied to life.

The work of Matthew Arnold may be said to have consisted in three great lines of illustration of this main principle. There were many other lines besides these. For instance, there are those queer creatures, the Bottleses, in *Friendship's Garland*, whose great idea in life is to marry their deceased wives' sisters; and that fascinating little book is written to show that that, and several other matters of equal gravity and importance, are, after all, something less than the chief end of man. Talking of *Friendship's Garland*, one is reminded of the extraordinary bitterness with which Matthew Arnold's humor has been received in some quarters. There runs through all his prose a light vein of banter which seems to have had,

in the days when the men to whom it referred were living, a peculiarly aggravating quality. For my part I have never been able quite to understand this. Mr. Roebuck and the bishops and the various people whom he praises and blames in their day, must surely have been somewhat unnecessarily self-conscious — they or their friends — if these pleasantries gave them such dire offence. To-day, after so long a time, the men are dead and most of their names entirely unfamiliar. In order to find the meaning of many of the references one has to search back into matters which are almost universally forgotten. We at least may allow ourselves the full enjoyment of all this side of our study without feeling it incumbent upon us to lose our temper with one who had such an astonishing power of keeping his.

One or other of the three points which we shall now consider has sometimes been conceived as being the distinctive message of Matthew Arnold. As a matter of fact this is not so. His message is the difference between means and ends. These are only very fully expanded illustrations or applications of that message.

1. *His defence of literature, and especially poetry, in contrast with science.* He finds in sci-

ence a magnificent sort of intellectual machinery, but it is in literature proper that he finds the real ends towards which man's spirit seeks. He has no railing words against science or any of its hypotheses, such as we find on the tongue of Thomas Carlyle. Indeed he never speaks against science at all, or any of its discoveries or methods. He only makes a plea for elements beyond mere facts, for something which science can never give to the human spirit — something satisfying enough to be called an end in itself. Science is excellent machinery, and its ultimate product may greatly enrich mankind; but scientists tend to forget that, and sometimes imagine the acquisition of facts and the fortifying of theories to be the ultimate end for which man's mind is made. Arnold sees the popular taste of his time declining from literary values to a growing interest in mere statistics and theories which have no spiritual value whatever. "If I live to be eighty," he says, "I shall probably be the only person in England who reads anything but newspapers and scientific publications." It is interesting to contrast the following extract with the "gorilla damnifications" of Carlyle.

In the very Senate House and heart of our English Cambridge I once ventured, though not without an apology for my profaneness, to hazard the opinion that for the majority of mankind a little of mathematics, even, goes a long way. Of course this is quite consistent with their being of immense importance as an instrument to something else; but it is the few who have the aptitude for thus using them, not the bulk of mankind.

The natural sciences do not, however, stand on the same footing with these instrument-knowledges. Experience shows us that the generality of men will find more interest in learning that, when a taper burns, the wax is converted into carbonic acid and water, or in learning the explanation of the phenomenon of dew, or in learning how the circulation of the blood is carried on, than they find learning that the genitive plural of *pais* and *pas* does not take the circumflex on the termination. And one piece of natural knowledge is added to another, and others are added to that, and at last we come to propositions so interesting as Mr. Darwin's famous proposition that 'our ancestor was a hairy quadruped furnished with a tail and pointed ears, probably arboreal in his habits.' . . .

Interesting, indeed, these results of science are, important they are, and we should all of us be acquainted with them. But what I now wish you to mark is, that we are still, when they are propounded to us and we receive them, we are still in the sphere of intellect and knowledge. And for the generality of men there will be found, I say, to arise, when they have duly taken in the proposition that their ancestor was 'a hairy quadruped furnished with a tail and

pointed ears, probably arboreal in his habits,' there will be found to arise an invincible desire to relate this proposition to the sense in us for conduct, and to the sense in us for beauty. But this the men of science will not do for us, and will hardly even profess to do. They will give us other pieces of knowledge, other facts, about other animals and their ancestors, or about plants, or about stones, or about stars; and they may finally bring us to those great 'general conceptions of the universe, which are forced upon us all,' says Professor Huxley, 'by the progress of physical science.' But still it will be *knowledge* only which they give us; knowledge not put for us into relation with our sense for conduct, our sense for beauty, and touched with emotion by being so put; not thus put for us, and therefore, to the majority of mankind, after a certain while, unsatisfying, wearying.

Another instance may be quoted to the same effect:

I once mentioned in a school-report, how a young man in one of our English training colleges having to paraphrase the passage in *Macbeth* beginning,

Can'st thou not minister to a mind diseased?

turned this line into, 'Can you not wait upon the lunatic?' And I remarked what a curious state of things it would be, if every pupil of our national schools knew, let us say, that the moon is two thousand one hundred and sixty miles in diameter, and thought at the same time that a good paraphrase for

Can'st thou not minister to a mind diseased?

was, 'Can you not wait upon the lunatic?' If one is driven to choose, I think I would rather have a young person ignorant about the moon's diameter, but aware that 'Can you not wait upon the lunatic?' is bad, than a young person whose education had been such as to manage things the other way.

These illustrations are sufficient as an example of Arnold's attitude towards science in contrast with literature. It is interesting to compare with these the following extracts from Ex-President Woodrow Wilson's *Mere Literature:*

It is not knowledge that moves the world, but ideals, convictions, the opinions or fancies that have been held or followed.

The language which the philologists set out before us with such curious erudition is of very little use as a vehicle for the essences of the human spirit.

And you must produce in color, with the touch of imagination which lifts what you write away from the dull levels of mere exposition. Black-and-white sketches may serve some purposes of the artist, but very little of actual nature is in mere black-and-white. The imagination never works thus with satisfaction. Nothing is ever conceived completely when conceived so grayly, without suffusion of real light. The mind creates, as great Nature does, in colors, with deep chiaroscuro and burning lights.

It is a hard saying, but the truth of it is inexorable: be an artist, or prepare for oblivion. You may write a chronicle, but you will not serve yourself

thereby. You will only serve some fellow who shall come after you, possessing, what you did not have, an ear for the words you could not hit upon; an eye for the colors you could not see; a hand for the strokes you missed.

Many of us can remember some teacher who spoiled for us whole regions of literature, by applying to them too rigorously, and often too irrelevantly, a scientific method and spirit. To treat Milton's poetry as a hunting-ground for the game of grammar and analysis is surely a mistake, if indeed it be not a crime. He who in after years cannot read *Lycidas* without thinking of principal and subordinate clauses may incline to the latter view. This mistaking of machinery for the real end was certainly a danger of science in the time in which Matthew Arnold wrote, and he did much to save the situation. On the one hand there are many scientific men who have frankly confessed that such knowledge as they could seek and find was but machinery and not the true end of life. On the other hand, there have been those who, like Professor J. Arthur Thompson, have been able to invest scientific facts with a literary, poetic, and idealistic charm which may quite justly be regarded as a spiritual end in itself.

2. A good deal of Arnold's prose was occupied with the discussion of contemporary questions in regard to *Dissent and the Church of England*. He was brought into much connection with Dissenters and their point of view during his twenty years of school inspection. He was able to see the principles for which they fought, but he was always inclined to regard the Nonconformist conscience as the product of a somewhat unbalanced Hebraism, and to introduce into it, so far as he might, a little of the Hellenistic spirit. None of his readers will forget his play with the famous quotation, "The dissidence of dissent and the protestantism of the Protestant religion," nor his plea that however justifiable protesting might be, it could never be considered as a final end of the human spirit. This, however, need not detain us. It is but one more illustration of our main thesis, and a subordinate one at that.

3. *Theology*. As *St. Paul and Protestantism*, and *The Irish Essays*, deal largely with Dissent, so the theological discussions are mainly included in *Literature and Dogma* and *God and the Bible*. The effect which these books produced in England at the time of their publication was dramatic in its intensity. They seemed at first to have struck

at the very center of Christianity, and were at once attacked by the orthodox, and indeed by many believers of a broader type, with an unusual bitterness. It is probable that the verdict of posterity will not reckon these among Matthew Arnold's happiest essays. Their presentations of the Trinity and the doctrine of Justification by Faith, with other matters of a similar kind, are extreme to the point of caricature. It is inconceivable that definitions of God such as "the eternal power, not ourselves, which makes for Righteousness," should ever commend themselves as satisfying to the religious soul of any generation. On the other hand, the definition of religion as "morality touched with emotion" is certainly very suggestive so far as it goes; while Arnold's writings, both in these books, and in his *Essays on Criticism*, regarding Jesus Christ and His ministry, are not only suggestive but permanently valuable in their own right. His account of Christ's *method* of inward spirit instead of outward observances, and His *secret* of self-denial, — expressed in unaccustomed language far removed from the somewhat conventional phrases which religion is too apt to use, — is startlingly clear and often very beautiful.

From the theological side, the main criticism of Arnold's position must center on the questions of miracles and of the personality of God. In regard to the personality of God, his substitution of "the Eternal" for the Hebrew word "Jehovah" is not admissible. Israel's sense of her God was rather *the actual* than *the eternal*, and conveyed the meaning of an intensely vital belief in His being. Her God was personal, not only living for the thought and speculation of man, but also commanding, loving and revealing. Similarly, the famous dictum, *Miracles do not happen*, which became so widely popularized in its echo in *Robert Elsmere*, is one against which we emphatically protest. It would be absurd to say that a man has no right to this opinion. All that one can say is that it is based upon insufficient grounds. The ground on which it is chiefly based in *Literature and Dogma* is that the *Zeitgeist* is against miracles. In this connection it is only fair to point out that while, on many occasions, the great leaders of humanity have been the interpreters and the mouthpieces of the *Zeitgeist*, or spirit of the age, yet there have been many instances in which a prophet has defied the spirit of his age, and when the true leadership of the time has been a revolt against the *Zeitgeist*.

On the other hand, it must be freely confessed that not only our literature but our theology has been enriched by both these volumes. Both personality and miracle were in Arnold's time very crudely conceived by many apologists for Christianity. The former sometimes involved an actual though unconscious tritheism, and the latter the crude conception that a miracle is necessarily a breach of natural law. Recent work upon these subjects has very much widened and deepened our conception of personality; and as to miracle, the modern man regards that as the effluence of divine personality. Granted the personality of Jesus, as Arnold himself describes it, the miracle would be that there should be no miracles when that personality came in contact with the facts of life and of society around Him. Now it was against what he took to be crude and, indeed, impossible views of personality and miracle that Arnold revolted. He was vexed by the emphasis that had been laid in the Christian teaching upon mere dogma, and especially vexed by these dogmas as they were taught in his time. His point was that dogma — the formulated statement of Christian belief — is only a bit of the machinery of truth, and that we have to go beyond it in order

to seek and find truth itself. He saw people on all hands, as he thought, out after words: and indeed it was a very valuable service that he rendered to religious thought when he called them back from that vain chase, and taught them to seek with the finer instruments and subtler measures of literature for the great realities. Thus, although to-day we do not accept his position theologically, any more than our fathers did, we must confess that he exposed some quite impossible and fantastic ways of speech and definition, and by doing so helped forward the course of theological progress. Like Carlyle, it may be said of Arnold, that when he sought to define religious things, he fell into the futility that always attends definitions of that which so far transcends them. Religious truths cannot be pigeonholed in a detailed creed without losing their most powerful appeal, and all such definitions can be valuable only as a machinery which man's thought uses for certain subordinate purposes. We do not know God through our definitions of Him. Yet these definitions may serve to remind us of direct and personal experience of God which life has given us. As regards Matthew Arnold, this is abundantly evident when we turn from his *Literature and Dogma* to read his

poetry. There was no conscious contradiction between the two in his mind, but the difference is plainly apparent to the spirit of the reader. As in the case of Carlyle, it again becomes manifest that the man of letters is working from a far broader and deeper basis of religious conviction than he is able to express when he addresses himself to the task of creed-making.

It may seem a bold venture to shift the center of our study of Matthew Arnold from *Literature and Dogma* to *Culture and Anarchy*. It is to be feared that for one who has read the latter work there are ten to whom the former is familiar. Yet, from the point of view of the writer's own thinking, it is absolutely necessary to do this if we would fairly judge and estimate his work. *Literature and Dogma*, whether we accept or reject its detailed teaching, is after all at best but a specific application of the great principles which he enunciates with such force and clearness in *Culture and Anarchy*. Those great principles are his gospel, his message to his time. He saw that the crudities in which the popular mind was expressing itself were endangering the inner life of the nation, and it was to save that life from catastrophe that he strove consciously and unceasingly. He was

supremely conscious that he had a saving message of this sort, and he sent it forth with all the earnestness of which he was capable, now using the lighter weapons of raillery and playful banter, again marshaling to his aid all that was finest in literary expression and most charming and surprising in his very original mind. He sought to find a form for popular thought which would enable it to survive the dangers with which it was threatened at the time. He was always fully aware that he had a message. "One cannot change English ideas so much as, if I live, I hope to change them, without . . . making a good many people uncomfortable." "I more and more become conscious of having something to do and the resolution to do it."

Charles Kingsley, when he read *Culture and Anarchy*, caught the spirit and intention of Arnold beneath the violent discussions of the hour, and wrote as follows: "I have at last had time to read carefully your *Culture and Anarchy*, and here is my verdict, if you care for it; that it is an exceedingly wise and true book, and likely, as such, to be little listened to this autumn, but to sink into the ground and die, and bear fruit next spring — when the spring comes." That is exactly what

has happened; and now, under other skies and with an entirely different outlook from that against which he protested, one feels the power, and turns back again to the message he then sent forth as a solitary voice crying in the wilderness.

In estimating Carlyle's message we summed it up in five points, as became its Hebraic Calvinism. For the sake of clarity we may be permitted to take Arnold's message also in divisions, although we shall take but three, which mainly sent forth his Hellenism into his times. As has been said already, the two writers had a great deal in common, although they approached their truths from different angles and in a somewhat different spirit. They were both physicians of the soul and of their times. They saw the disease and diagnosed it in wonderfully similar terms. The remedies which they proposed differed as the Hebrew spirit always differs from the Greek.

The first characteristic message of Matthew Arnold we shall call *gravitas*. There is no English word precisely corresponding to it. It is not quite the same as Carlyle's seriousness, nor would the word graveness convey its exact note. All students of Latin come to realize that stately, sedate,

self-respecting, self-controlled quality of mind with which the noblest of the Roman writers walked through their allotted space. That is *gravitas*. It is not incompatible with lighter moods. There is plenty of fun in Arnold's work, abundance of repartee and keen and courteous satire, whose courtesy sometimes renders it the keener. He brandished a rapier in contrast with Carlyle's bludgeon. He has been called flippant by critics who seem to have been singularly lacking in a sense of humor. "K. said I was becoming as dogmatic as Ruskin. I told her the difference was that Ruskin was dogmatic and wrong"—when a man speaks like that, what is the use of losing one's temper? The badinage of his work contrasts strangely and very affectingly with the deeper note of pathos which is seldom far below the surface. He was full of compassion as well as of amusement, and the combination produces "that close touch with readers who did not know him, as if an old and intimate friend were talking."

The quality of *gravitas* is perhaps most manifest in his conception of poetry, its nature and its function. He insists upon truth in poetry, and defines it as a criticism of life. Many of us may feel that the definition is inadequate. Poetry in-

cludes much that cannot possibly be defined as criticism of life: and poetic criticism is but one kind of criticism, that kind which is managed through the medium of emotion and imagination. Yet the definition is deeply significant, and is characteristic of his *gravitas*. This quality is illustrated best of all in his Nature poems, such as *Quiet Work*, in which we feel the calming sense of Nature's austerity, her obedience to laws and her infinite patience. It is generally held that he is greatest of all in elegy, and it would be difficult to surpass, in the whole realm of English literature, the elegiac perfectness of his *Rugby Chapel*. The old Virgilian cry which he so aptly calls "the sense of tears in mortal things," is heard throughout his singing; and he himself has told us that in his view "the function of poetry is to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us." There is little of the thunderous solemnities of the Hebrew poets here. It is classic work, reproducing with wonderful accuracy the severe dignity of the Greek spirit. He upholds this against the slightness and prettiness of much modern verse. He turns back to what he happily calls "the high and excellent seriousness of Dante . . . the high seriousness which comes from absolute sincerity." His own native

seriousness stood him in good stead, and has given us some of his most excellent teaching.

On one occasion an enthusiastic lady sent him a volume of literary criticism, full of high-pitched praise. He said to her that "for only one or two of the authors named was such a strain of praise admissible, and that we lost all real standard of excellence by praising so uniformly and immoderately. She answered me with charming good temper that very likely I was right, but it was pleasant to her to think that excellence was common and abundant. But excellence is not common and abundant; on the contrary, as the Greek poet long ago said, excellence dwells among rocks hardly accessible, and a man must wear his heart out before he can reach her. Whoever talks of excellence as common and abundant is on the way to lose all standard of excellence, and when the right standard of excellence is lost it is not likely that much which is excellent will be produced."

There is much more that might be said upon this subject, but the most interesting thing about it seems to be its contrast from the seriousness of Carlyle. Carlyle and he were both dealing with the same phenomenon, the light-hearted and

shallow estimates of things, which both of them felt to be among the greatest dangers of their times. Carlyle was a shock-headed prophet, crying at the top of his voice to all of us to notice the eternal silences. Arnold was rather of the company of the Athenian sages who walked with bowed head, in dignity and reverence, impressing us as men who feel the power of these silences. It need hardly be pointed out that both of these messages have their place in Jesus Christ. Christ was of the Hebrew race, and the words of the prophets of Israel were continually in His heart and on His lips; yet it is His own words about the straight gate and the narrow way which we hear frequently quoted by Arnold, and which he, in his Grecian method, passes on.

2. The second of Arnold's characteristics is that of inwardness. Goethe has said "He who will work aright must never rail, must not trouble himself by what is ill done, but only do well himself." In his poem entitled *Self Dependence* Arnold seems to accept this point of view, and he has been much criticized for it. It has been said, for instance, that this claim to be self-centered violates the fundamental law of our being, and there have been those who have gone so far as to say that it contradicts all that Christ lived for.

Such criticism is certainly wide of the mark in regard to one whose whole work is so full of passages memorable for their interest in mankind and their compassion for the multitude. Only, the interfering way was not his. His own method of working was not any attempt to found a school, or to send out propaganda for some new program of action. He laughs over this and supposes himself and his followers assembled in the parlor of an inn to fashion a party. He tells us that on such an occasion all that he could have said to the company would have been, "Know thyself." His understanding of inwardness was very different from anything that could have made him a mere critic of the strife of others, while he himself remained aloof. Even in respect of practical effect, that cannot be laid to his charge. His educational work brought about many reforms. His "culture" has undoubtedly revealed a danger which was threatening material science, and in certain quarters it has saved her from it. He did cultivate altruism: only he believed that it is the spirit, rather than the outward agitation, which quickeneth. "There is nothing like love and admiration for bringing people to a likeness with what they love and admire." Here is another bond with Carlyle: they

express themselves differently, and yet they are striving against the same evils.

Arnold trusts for outward reform not to organization but to inward character in man. This is borne out by a very suggestive and significant sentence, in regard to an appreciation of probity and disinterestedness: "Merely to make a profession of faith of the kind here made by Keats is not difficult; what we would rather look for is some evidence of the instinct for character, for virtue, passing into the man's life, passing into his work." Elsewhere he tells us that the conclusion of the whole matter is, "Men are wanted everywhere — not wealth, freedom, institutions, et cetera, et cetera, so urgently as men, and we have all to try, in our separate spheres, to be as much of men as we can." That is to say that the effect of a man upon his times and upon the other men who surround him, must proceed from within and not from without the soul; that a man does more, produces more changes and effects, by being the man he is than by all he will ever say, or write, or organize, or do.

Culture and Anarchy gives us a very full and brilliant account of this doctrine of inwardness. The doctrine is indeed common to much of his

writing, and is advocated under the name of *Geist* in *Friendship's Garland.* In *Culture and Anarchy*, however, he gives the fullest exposition of his view of his country at that time. He believes that faith in machinery is its besetting danger, and that we are all apt in every rank of life to mistake means for real ends. One man imagines that if the country has coal enough all will be well. Another places all his reliance in railroads, or population, or wealth, or religious organizations, or freedom. Each of these, he would tell us, is an excellent thing, but its excellence does not lie in itself but in that which it produces. In itself it is only a piece of machinery, and he who imagines that he attains to the true meaning and end of life when he has merely accumulated wealth, or multiplied railroads, or population, or organization, has made the fundamental error of mistaking machinery for real ends.

The most brilliant illustration of this is in connection with freedom. Among the delusions of mid-Victorian England none was more patent to our neighbors across the Atlantic or the North Sea, than our conviction that the freedom which our nation had attained was the ultimate goal of human effort. The Englishman who used to go

about the continent of Europe, astonishing the natives of other lands by his odd behaviour, justified himself continually upon the plea that every British man was free to do as he liked. Concerning this the following words from *Culture and Anarchy* are memorable, and their application is by no means confined to the British Islands: "May not every man in England say what he likes? — Mr. Roebuck perpetually asks; and that he thinks, is quite sufficient, and when every man may say what he likes, our aspirations ought to be satisfied. But the aspirations of culture, which is the study of perfection, are not satisfied, unless what men say, when they may say what they like, is worth saying, — has good in it, and more good than bad. In the same way the *Times*, replying to some foreign strictures on the dress, looks, and behaviour of the English abroad, urges that the English ideal is that every one should be free to do and to look just as he pleases. But culture indefatigably tries, not to make what each raw person may like, the rule by which he fashions himself; but to draw ever nearer to a sense of what is indeed beautiful, graceful, and becoming, and to get the raw person to like that."

While in these ways people are giving undue

importance to machinery, they themselves always suffer. The condition of the man's self and the culture of his soul fall into the background, while the management of the machine absorbs the interest and attention. Such persons are affirming their ordinary self instead of their best self, and this is a habit that is found in all classes of the community. At the top of the social scale there are the aristocratic classes, named by Arnold the Barbarians. They are out for honors, and field sports, and good manners, as if these were the final and highest ends of living. As a matter of fact these pursuits are but means towards the nobler human ends. Lower down the scale are the middle classes whom he names Philistines. They are living for fanaticisms of various sorts, for business, for the accumulation of money, and above all, for comfort. Of them Arnold writes heavily and with great emphasis: "Far more than by the helplessness of an aristocracy whose day is fast coming to an end, far more than by the rawness of a lower class, whose day is only just beginning, we are imperilled by what I call the Philistinism of our middle class. On the side of beauty and taste, vulgarity; on the side of morals and feeling, coarseness; on the side of

mind and spirit, unintelligence, — this is Philistinism." It is very seldom that we find such strong language in his writing, and it is noteworthy that this extract is not from *Culture and Anarchy*, but from his volume on *Celtic Literature*. Below these two classes in the social scale are the Populace whose ends in life are "bawling and smashing and beer."

Now it must not be thought that Arnold is finding indiscriminate fault with people whose energies go out in these directions. Many of these activities afford excellent occupations and have much to plead for themselves. His point is that they are not the true and final ends of human living, that none of them is the thing for which we are born, that the only value of any of them is the amount of manhood which it can produce, the fineness of feeling, the quality of mind and spirit, the sense of honor. To all who engage in them Arnold speaks in unmistakable language. Too many people have been in the habit of continually comforting and flattering them, while they pursued their misdirected way. He would fain point out to each of them the true path towards real and abiding excellence.

In each of these classes, however, there is a cer-

tain number of exceptions — aliens who do not mistake the means for the ends. These are led by the spirit to seek after a perfection which is the true end of human life. In the essay on *Numbers* in his *Discourses in America* he gives a very remarkable account of this band of aliens. They are "possessed of an inward spiritual activity, having for its characteristics, increased sweetness, increased light, increased life, increased sympathy." These, in his judgment, are the real ends of human nature. It is for the sake of these that men and women are born; and, when their lives are over, the true success or failure of each is measured by this and by no other standard. The sweetness and the light, which Arnold calls the real ends for humanity, are not qualities that can come to man from without. They move the soul at its center, and when they have become the chosen motives of a life, that life is carried on towards perfection upon these great currents of the inner being and thought. He warns us all not only to walk by the best light that we have, but to be sure that that light is not darkness; and urges us to pay great attention to the inner lights by which we live.

It will be seen that this doctrine of the inner

life is exactly, and indeed confessedly, taken from the teaching of Christ. The kingdom of heaven cometh not by observation but is within men. The qualities of which Christ speaks in this way are the real end and goal towards which men strive, or ought to strive; and Arnold's teaching on these matters is a magnificent application of that ancient Christian doctrine to the civilization and life of to-day. It is true that Jesus was of the Hebrew race: yet, as I have elsewhere pointed out, there was much in His marvelous teaching which was entirely in accord with the finest Hellenism. Still in the main these first two characteristics of Matthew Arnold's teaching can be wholly appropriated neither by Greek nor Hebrew. This much may be said, that there is here a warmer appreciation of beauty for its own sake, and of sweetness as contrasted with violence, and of light which is intellectual as well as moral, than we are accustomed to associate with the Hebrew genius.

The difference between Arnold and Carlyle in regard to *gravitas* and inwardness is not so very great. The things they are seeking are the same, although the methods of their search are different. When we come to the third point we part from

Carlyle entirely, and the doctrine of Matthew Arnold reaches its most purely Hellenistic form.

3. That point is wholeness as contrasted with one-sidedness. We have already seen something of this in Arnold's criticism of those who live for means instead of ends. He holds that the machinery which men glorify is not only an external, it is also a one-sided and partial thing. Anybody who lives for any one of the goals of the Barbarians, the Philistines, or the Populace, and neglects his own soul in doing so, is really sacrificing the whole to one of its parts. He tells us that he hates all preponderance of single elements. He was one of those of whom it may be truly said that he "saw life steadily and saw it whole." One remembers his love of full streams of water, which did not by any means conflict with the fastidiousness of his search for perfect things. As in water, so in life and thought, he thirsts for full streams. He desires a harmonious life, and blames our want of flexibility that can only see one side of a thing, and that so often injures earnest men by leading them towards a provincialism of the mind. "My brother Saxons have, as is well known, a terrible way with them of wanting to improve everything but themselves off the face of the

earth: I have no such passion for finding nothing but myself anywhere: I like variety."

This teaching is mainly given in his chapter on *Hellenism and Hebraism* in *Culture and Anarchy*. Of these passages he himself said that they "are in the main, I am convinced, so true that they will form a kind of center for English thought and speculation on the matters treated in them." Man's great occupations are doing and thinking. Hebraism takes charge of the doing, occupies itself with conduct, champions conscience and enforces obedience. Hellenism, on the other hand, is occupied with man's understanding and his feeling, "following with flexible activity the whole play of the universal order." In other words Hebraism is occupied with sin and righteousness, Hellenism with truth and beauty.

Now it must be repeated that Matthew Arnold is no enemy to Hebraism. He does indeed revolt against the doctrine that mere protesting is a satisfactory end in human life, just as he revolts against the amassing of wealth or coal as sufficient ideals for any man or nation. Yet, on the other hand, he tells us definitely that conduct is three fourths of life. He confesses that the Greeks failed for want of conscience, and would have as-

sented to Carlyle's saying that Socrates is terribly at ease in Zion. But after all that is said he reminds us that the Hebrew ideals are not all. The Puritans have put too great a stress upon this side of things, as if there were no other. But the wider culture of the Renaissance has its claims as well, to which the man who would be perfect must attain and to which he must do justice. The defect in the older days was entirely moral. The defect of to-day is rather in the intelligence. We have much earnestness about us, but we are somewhat lacking in our appreciation of great ideas, of beauty and width of view. To illustrate this he uses many clever instances and epigrams, drawn from current politics and ways of thought. He sees about him some who limit their desires to making money and saving their souls. Others boast that they know their Bible: but Arnold replies that no man who knows nothing else knows even his Bible. Thus, besides the many vulgarizing single objects after which men strive, there is a great and systematic tendency towards one-sidedness, a provincialism of the mind which leads to a consequent vulgarity.

It is here most of all that he parts company with Carlyle. He does not deny what Carlyle

says: indeed he himself says a very great deal of it in his own language. But he will not allow that that is the only thing to say. He is bent upon something more arduous even than the path of Carlyle. The late Principal Rainy, whose life-work led him to face many varieties of eager but uninstructed earnestness, said of it on one occasion: "Ah, gentlemen, it is so very easy to be earnest." Arnold, feeling that earnestness could never of itself reach the highest human goals, and seeing many earnest men singularly devoid of intelligence in their enthusiasm, protests: "I never liked Carlyle. He seemed to me to be carrying coals to Newcastle, as our proverb says; preaching earnestness to a nation which had plenty of it by nature, but was less abundantly supplied with several other useful things." He sums this part of his doctrine up in one great and memorable sentence: "The lesson must be learned that the human spirit is wider than the most priceless of the forces which bear it onward; and that to the whole development of man Hebraism itself is, like Hellenism, but a contribution." Thus his conception of culture is well defined as "sweetness and light." It is good to let our thought play freely on every subject and thus save ourselves from narrowness

and violence. In the words of Bishop Wilson, "the great end is to make reason and the will of God prevail." In face of all the imperfect enthusiasms and one-sided earnestness of the day, Arnold keeps quietly reiterating the ancient command, "Be ye therefore perfect."

In view of all this it is interesting and instructive to consider once again the relation of Matthew Arnold's teaching to that of Jesus Christ. We have already discussed the views expressed in *Literature and Dogma* and *God and the Bible*, and have pointed out the great and serious defects of these views. It is true that when Christ said, "Be ye therefore perfect," He added, "as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The personal note in reference to the Father makes all the difference in the world in our quest of perfection. Yet, so far as it goes, the teaching of Matthew Arnold in regard to human conduct is essentially Christine doctrine. We often forget how manysided and complete the life and teachings of Jesus were. When we think of Jerusalem and Calvary it is no wonder that we sometimes regard Christianity solely in its Hebraic aspect. Yet there was much in Jesus that brought wistful Greeks to inquire of Him: and what has been

known as the Galilean Gospel was also an essential part of His message, and included the entire world of man's thoughts and feelings. The doctrine of Jesus was broad enough to cover the whole interest of human life, and His object was to perfect life as a whole. We are apt to make His love and His outlook "too narrow, with false limits of our own," and to claim Him for that side of things with which we or our fathers have been led exclusively to associate Him. But Christian religion is not any one department of life, however sacred; it is the developing and perfecting of the whole of life. Art and science, pleasure as well as pain, all true thinking and wise appreciation, are really religious and Christian ends. We owe much gratitude to this great thinker and teacher for reminding us of these things. He never permits us to relax the strain of conscience and the emphasis upon worthy conduct: yet he counsels us to open our hearts to all the width and wisdom and beauty of the world. He reveres conscience, but he would make wider scope for it than the convent school or the ecclesiastical court. He would give conscience room for its tremendous play across the whole field of full-blooded human experience.

V

ROBERT BROWNING
THE HEBREW

ON a golden day, now far in the past, it was my high privilege to see and hear Robert Browning. In the year 1884 the University of Edinburgh held its tercentenary celebrations. Great men from far and near gathered on that occasion to bring their congratulations and their good wishes, and to receive academic honors. One day of that week was given to the undergraduates at the University. We met in the largest hall in the city, and in order to secure places we assembled at least an hour before the proceedings of the day were to begin. For the speakers a high platform was erected, which was entirely empty except for one elderly gentleman, stoutish and of robust build, his white hair abundant and very carefully trimmed, his pointed beard suggesting a French maréchal. His alert eyes wandered round the assemblage, and a good-

humored smile played upon his lips. We sang after the manner of students; and, as song followed song, we noticed him beating time to our singing, with hand stretched out along the bar in front of him. By-and-by others joined him, and among them one whom we took to be Robert Browning. The speakers that day were distinguished—Virchow, Pasteur, Lesseps, James Russell Lowell, and many others addressed us—but we were bent on Browning, and the hall rang with his name as we shouted. For a time we pleaded in vain, but at last there arose, not the man with long brown hair whom we expected, but our friend of the song-time. He said: "Gentlemen, all the world knows that everything I have ever said is entirely unintelligible. I shall therefore make no speech, but shall only say, from my heart, God bless you."

Much might be said of the unintelligibility of Browning and the reasons why he has been found so difficult by many, but that is not our proper task to-day. On the whole, one may say in passing that his *Sordello* has terrified the world away from his other work. Many stories have been told of that poem, the most savage of them being that of him who said that there were only two

lines in the whole poem that were intelligible, and both of these were lies. He referred to the first line, "Who will may hear Sordello's story told," and then to the last line, "Who would has heard Sordello's story told." Much of the poet's supposed unintelligibility is due to his habit of compression, to a certain intricacy and swiftness of thought, and to some tricks of language by which favorite words stand in his vocabulary for special meanings of their own. The patient reader soon becomes accustomed to these things, and may even ultimately be inclined to agree with Mr. Chesterton, that the secret of Browning's unintelligibility is neither more nor less than the extreme simplicity of his writings. On the whole he is easier to understand than many of his interpreters are. There is a story of someone who was asked if he understood John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and who said that he did, and was hopeful that one day he would be able to understand the notes. The intricate symbolism into which Browning's work has been interpreted by some of his commentators has proved more astonishing and perplexing than anything that he himself perpetrated. As a matter of fact he thought very clearly and expressed himself very

exactly; and he only requires on the part of the reader a certain amount of patience and, above all, a wise beginning.

For an entrance into his work the first six books of the old edition are to be recommended, especially *Men and Women*, *Dramatis Personæ*, *Dramatic Romances*, and *Dramatic Lyrics*. This will introduce the reader to such poems as *Karshish*, *Andrea Del Sarto*, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, and *One Word More*, to say nothing of many short and quite easy lyrics which present no difficulty. *Pippa Passes* may follow, *The Ring and the Book*, *Balaustion's Adventure*, and *Ferishtah's Fancies*. After that the way is clear, and there need be no hesitation in taking up any of his work.

As to Browning's biography, he was born in London in 1812. His father was a business man of exceptional intellectual powers, and his mother a woman of beautiful and deeply religious nature. We have the customary notes of precocity in his childhood, but this precocity does not seem to have had such baleful effects upon him as it has upon many budding geniuses. It is a dangerous experiment to take a boy from school at fourteen and allow him to study with a tutor, or take odd lectures without regular university training. Still

more dangerous is it to permit him to choose definitely the career of poetry at the age of twenty, and to seal his vow by writing a poem like *Pauline*. He seems to have spent his time largely in frequenting literary society, and in reading at the British Museum. One would gladly have a record of the books which he studied there. Indeed one could almost compile such a record from the immense variety and width of his references, many of which point to quite recondite sources of information and suggestion. The dominant influence, however, was Shelley; and the power of Shelley, openly confessed in *Paracelsus*, is felt right on through the years to the very end. We do not need to linger over his travels in Russia and Italy and elsewhere, or upon his relations with Macready and his attempts to stage one or two of his plays. In 1846 he met Elizabeth Barrett, and the romance of love and devotion, begun in that year, terminated only with her death in 1861. After her death he lived in Italy and in London, until that memorable morning in 1889, when the proof-sheets of his *Asolando* and the death of its author came together to the heart of England. He has been dead these thirty-four years, and yet to some of us he is more alive to-day than ever in the past.

While there is little to tell about Browning's outward career, the story of his literary and inward life affords us one of the most interesting developments in biography. It may be roughly divided into four periods. The first of these, beginning at the age of twenty in the year 1832, lasted but a short time, until 1835. In these years he was completely self-centered, and his output gave us but two poems, *Pauline* and *Paracelsus*. *Pauline* is a confession of young moods, with the alternations, common to all sensitive spirits, of extreme exaltation and depression. The depressions are mingled with the ferocity of a somewhat unenlightened conscience, and the poem gives the sense of violent moral and emotional exaggeration. Mr. Chesterton cleverly says that when Pauline's lover is talking about his hell-dress he is simply "confessing that the grass is green, and whispering to a priest hoarsely that he has found a sun in heaven." Certainly the self-consciousness of it is unusual and extreme. It is summed up in these lines:

I am made up of an intensest life,
Of a most clear idea of consciousness
Of self . . .
a principle of restlessness
Which would be all, have, see, know, taste, feel, all —
This is myself.

It is well for us that it was impossible for Browning in his maturer days to get his hands upon this superb poem. He wished to suppress it, and would certainly have done so if he could. It has indeed many crudenesses of diction, and much which makes the poet's anxiety to suppress it intelligible enough: yet it has flights of imagination and passionate depths which he never surpassed in after years, and it is a poem which the English language simply could not afford to do without. In the wonderful study of Paracelsus we have in the person of the ancient alchemist a kind of incarnation of man's aspiration after knowledge, set in dramatic contrast with the poet Aprile, and his aspiration after love. Browning's young sympathy with them both is so complete that in this also we find an entirely self-centered poem, giving an exact picture of the struggling soul of the lad.

The second period is what one may call the dramatic part of his life-work, and it is very much the longest and most important. It may be said to have lasted from 1835 to 1873. He finds his way into it through that much-abused masterpiece, *Sordello*, which is the long and intricate story of his own transition from a life wholly

bounded by itself, to a life devoted to the play of the world around him and the interests of other lives. It is his passage from the subjective to the objective mood. In the latter mood he let himself go with the most unrestricted freedom into every phase of human life. He searched far and near for his examples and found them in every land and in every time. He identified himself with them one by one, and *was* for the time being the man or woman of whom he wrote. It is probable that no poet has ever rivalled him in what may be called spiritual dramatization. The drama of circumstance, of word and deed, and of the immediate inducements which lie behind them, is common. All dramatists must go a certain way into the souls of men and women in order to come forth upon the world in their persons. But for Robert Browning the real seat of the drama has comparatively little to do with the external act or word. He penetrates into the innermost recesses of the personality, and takes his readers with him into those intimate and secret regions where the motives of future deeds, hot with burning desire, are being smitten into shape, and to those dim fields where the seeds of future conduct are being half-consciously sown.

The third period is a comparatively short and unimportant one. Professor Jones has spoken of his poetry at this time as bearing the marks of a philosophic change. It was as if God had got detached from the world and had to be argued to. It may well be questioned whether we can take the philosophic change very seriously. Browning had fallen upon a desolate mood, a time of deadness of spirit rather than change of philosophy. This period is indeed lit up with many brilliant and high lights, but it is restless and unsatisfied. In earlier days he found God and all religious truth by a kind of leap of intuition; he now argued to everything through long discourses, like *La Saisiaz*, *Fifine*, and *The Inn Album*. There are many points of splendid poetry; many heroic ballads, rough and carelessly tossed off; and some excellent Greek translation. Yet the work is not on the same level as the poetry of the dramatic period. Its light is lower, with occasional glimpses of the old flames of fire.

Finally the Indian Summer of his life arrived, and from 1884 to 1889 he wrote those three memorable books, *Ferishtah's Fancies*, *Parleyings with Certain Persons*, and *Asolando*. These, especially the middle one, still bear the marks of

the previous period, and cannot be put upon a level, either literary or spiritual, with his earlier work. In them there is still a certain element of somewhat laborious reasoning. But you feel that they are swiftly groping their way back to the intuitive time, and in the Epilogues to *Ferishtah* and to *Asolando* he gives us glorious swan-songs that are worthy of the best years of the past.

We may take for the main burden of our consideration the dramatic period of his work. In this it is difficult to identify personal elements, and to be quite sure that he means as his own conviction the point of view which any particular poem expounds. All his readers will remember his own defence of dramatic anonymity:

> Hoity toity! A street to explore,
> Your house the exception! '*With this same key*
> *Shakespeare unlocked his heart*,' once more!
> Did Shakespeare? If so, the less Shakespeare he!

Certainly a man has a right to his own way of revealing or concealing his personality, yet we who love him well can hardly help our curiosity in such matters. In the most confessedly dramatic work there are still betrayals which reveal

the soul of the dramatist. Strange and unexpected plots, fantastic and whimsical tragedy, are there in abundance; yet there is an unconfessed system, and one mind is manifest running through the gamut of all sorts of experience. Certain views or doctrines or convictions are obviously crucial and reveal themselves many times. Some of these are indeed habitual, and unconsciously tell the story of the author's own attitude towards many of the questions with which he deals.

During the long course of his work, there is manifest a change and expansion in his faith, and it is in connection with this expansion that we can see the synthesis of the two great elements of Hebraism and Hellenism. Roughly speaking, it may be said that the Hebraic tendencies are stronger in the early days and the Greek in the latter. This, however, must be very largely qualified. *Pauline* and *Paracelsus* are full of Greek references and utterances of the Greek spirit, while *Jochanan Hakkodosh* and *The Privilege of Burial* are sufficient evidence of the Hebrew spirit persisting to the end. Certainly the Hebrew conscience of righteousness keeps on sounding like a solemn bell through all the Greek work. It is enriched

and not cancelled by his interest in the wider world. In *Aristophanes' Apology*, for instance, one finds the lines:

> *Ashamed of shame,*
> *Constant in faith that only good works good,*
> *While evil yields no fruit but impotence!*

Red Cotton Nightcap Country is one long commentary upon the text that no man can serve God and mammon.

Undoubtedly in the passage from the youthful and passionate exaggerations of *Pauline*, through *Christmas Eve*, to the phases of thought represented by *The Ring and the Book* and *Asolando*, there is a considerable change. He falls back from the dogmatic detail which is expressed in his early thought, upon a general framework of truth, based on certain commanding principles and wide human experience. More and more he leaves each one to fill in the details of dogma for himself. He shifts the emphasis of faith from event to process, as no other writer of his time has done — the general process of faith rather than the narrative of events. By doing this, in a world of men and women who are only too apt to take the merest trifle of detail for vital Christian dogma, Browning was enabled to preserve many doubters from

exile. In the main such persons felt the truth of Christian faith and were willing to unite themselves with it, but they could not accept the vast mass of detailed dogma which had been supposed to be necessary to him who would call himself a Christian. It does not seem that Browning's later phases involved in any sense the renunciation of the earlier, or at least of anything essential in them. As Professor Dowden has said: "His theism involves rather than displays the truth shadowed forth in the life of Christ."

We may take it then that there is a constant and perpetual element of Hebraism running through the whole teaching of Robert Browning, while at the same time the Hellenic strain is never quite absent. At first the Hebraic tended to overshadow the Hellenic, while latterly the emphasis was reversed. All along his course, however, he was a prophet who could also be a casuist of the most remarkable subtlety, as in *Bishop Blougram;* and he was a prophet who was also a consummate artist, with a commanding sense of beauty, and a unique skill in exhibiting it.

There are many traces of interest and sympathy with the Jewish people in Browning, and it has even been said that there was a touch of the

Hebrew in his heredity. It would be easy to collect a number of interesting references which would confirm this. The following lines from *Paracelsus* remind us how even in a casual way his thoughts wandered in this direction. He is talking of Salzburg and he says:

See how bright St. Saviour's spire
Flames in the sunset; all its figures quaint
Gay in the glancing light: you might conceive them
A troop of yellow-vested white-haired Jews
Bound for their own land where redemption dawns.

Several poems are dedicated directly to Jewish subjects, and deal with the spiritual history of the race both in ancient and in modern times. This indeed is not in itself a very convincing argument, for other poets besides Browning have been attracted by the subject of the Jews and their history. Among the finest lyrics of Byron are his *Hebrew Melodies*, which drew forth from him much that lingers plaintively in the mind and heart of succeeding generations. Yet there is something different in Browning's Jewish work, which makes one feel it more characteristic of the poet than anything that Byron has written. Byron is, after all, but a passionate outsider, even in the finest of his Jewish poems. When we read

such poems as Browning's *Holy Cross Day* we could almost swear that the author was a Jew. It is significant also that five of his greatest and most famous religious poems are founded upon Jewish subjects — *Saul*, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, *Karshish*, *A Death in the Desert*, and the first part of the *Epilogue* to *Dramatis Personæ*.

These national touches, however, are of comparatively small import. Robert Browning was a child of the Hebrew spirit, and he, more than anyone else, stands for that spirit expressed in English poetry. The combination of this with the Greek spirit at its finest is certainly a startling one, and might seem to involve a *tour de force*. Yet it is just that astonishing combination of Hebraism with wider culture for which the majority of educated middle-class English people stand. Nothing could be further removed from the ordinary language of the average Englishman than the poems of Alfred Tennyson. There is a subtle essence that breathes upon the spirit from his choicest work, very difficult to define, delicate, elusive, and yet extremely powerful. It has in it the sense of the aristocratic Norman life which blended with the ruder Saxon genius and made England. One would have imagined that its ap-

peal would have been only to a few select spirits: yet the fact is that for many years his poems held the foremost place in popularity with the people of the Victorian Age. However far removed their daily life and ordinary speech may have been from those highly spiritual and exquisitely fastidious regions through which Tennyson led them, yet they felt at home there, or at least upon congenial ground. In Robert Browning the combination of the Greek and the Hebrew spirit was very different from what we find in Tennyson, yet it was essentially the same astonishing combination. Browning's education led him far into the Grecian country, but there was in his family history much that held him to the more rugged earnestness of the Hebraic life. His father was born and educated, and afterwards finished his life, in the Church of England, but during middle life he became a Dissenter for a time. His mother was a Scottish Presbyterian. Their son was in his childhood passionately religious under the direct influence of his mother and the Bible as she read it. It is no wonder that his poetry has made from the beginning so peculiarly strong an appeal to Free Church readers, and it is significant that no more appreciative nor satisfactory

interpretation of his work has yet appeared than that which has been published by a Nonconformist minister, Mr. Fotheringham. Every reader must already have remembered the confession of faith in *Christmas Eve*. There may be added the following lines from *Pauline*:

I have been keeping lonely watch with thee
In the damp night by weeping Olivet,
Or leaning on thy bosom, proudly less,
Or dying with thee on the lonely cross,
Or witnessing thine outburst from the tomb.
A mortal, sin's familiar friend, doth here
Avow that he will give all earth's reward,
But to believe and humbly teach the faith,
In suffering and poverty and shame,
Only believing he is not unloved.

This evangelical faith, with its intense conscience of sin, expressed in language so exquisite, is representative both of the Hebrew and of the Greek spirit.

In reverting to one or two of the five points which we noticed in Carlyle, we are reminded of the very fine tribute which Browning paid to him: "The goodness and sympathy which began so long ago, continued unabated until the end of Carlyle's life. . . . His love was altogether a free gift, and how much it has enriched my life I shall

hardly attempt to say. It will always seem, as it does now, enough to have lived for."

In regard to the seriousness which he had in common with Carlyle there can be no question, and it may be added that it took at first a much more definitely religious form, in the usually accepted meaning of the word "religious." He understood Calvinism, and was able to represent it as no other poet has ever done, in his *Johannes Agricola*. Never has there been a more splendid exposition of the heart of Calvinism than the opening lines of that great poem:

There's heaven above, and night by night
I look right through its gorgeous roof;
No suns and moons though e'er so bright
Avail to stop me; splendour-proof
I keep the broods of stars aloof:
For I intend to get to God,
For 'tis to God I speed so fast,
For in God's breast, my own abode,
Those shoals of dazzling glory, passed,
I lay my spirit down at last.
I lie where I have always lain,
God smiles as he has always smiled;
Ere suns and moons could wax and wane,
Ere stars were thundergirt, or piled
The heavens, God thought on me his child;

Ordained a life for me, arrayed
Its circumstances every one
To the minutest; ay, God said
This head this hand should rest upon
Thus, ere he fashioned star or sun.

But Johannes Agricola was not an orthodox Calvinist. Like many of the disciples of Luther and Calvin he outdid and exaggerated his master's teaching. When Calvinism becomes detached from conscience, and lapses into a moral fatalism, it becomes inconceivably dangerous and horrible. It was so with Agricola, who became the founder of a sect of Antinomians in his time; and Browning represents this in the latter part of the poem with a vividness and power which are beyond all praise.

The Hebrew seriousness has for one of its main characteristics a certain looking for of judgment, and is much exercised with the final rewards and punishments of life. We can see this phenomenon, of the present overshadowed by the future, very happily expressed in *Rabbi Ben Ezra*. In his old age that sage attains to a wonderful peace and patience, in view of the ultimate decision, which will assign their actual and permanent values to all the doubtful elements of the present.

On its graver side this tendency is manifest in the tremendous judgment scene at the end of *Easter Day*. Here we are reminded of the jealous God of Israel who will suffer no other gods before Him, and who passes strictest judgment upon a man's joy in life, and indeed upon everything that is distinctively Greek. That great poem gains new laurels now from the fact that Francis Thompson, in *The Hound of Heaven*, takes up its amazing theme, and adds to it a new and magnificent tenderness. There is nothing in *The Hound of Heaven* to suggest an imitation of *Easter Day*, and yet we may say without fear of contradiction that it never could have been written if the earlier poem had not first appeared.

The counterpart to Browning's seriousness is his humor. It is elephantine humor, frequently reminding one of the outbursts of laughter in such Hebrew prophets as Elijah and Isaiah. It is often rough, and sometimes seems violently intrusive. It is indeed characteristic, and yet somehow it is not quite natural. One sometimes feels as if a second Browning were looking in upon the first, and laughing at him as he worked. It is the humor of a bull in a china-shop, which no doubt is great fun for the bull, but may be somewhat dif-

ferently viewed by the shopkeeper. When Browning is humorous it can hardly be called dull, but may perhaps be considered a little lacking in repose. He laughs at his readers: "Oh British public, ye who like me not." He laughs at his critics, as in the famous outburst of rough hilarity in *Pacchiarotto*. Above all, he laughs at himself:

> *That bard's a Browning; he neglects the form,*
> *But ah, the sense, ye gods, the weighty sense!*

Such humor is part of the prophet's equipment. His business in dealing with sin, or any other part of the unsatisfactory side of life, is not merely to punish, or to protest, or to scourge. He is to show its absurdity and so persuade men to desist from it. This is a high achievement if it can be satisfactorily accomplished, and a very wonderful weapon in the doing of it is humor, however rough. If one can get a man to laugh at himself one can count upon his changing his ways.

Browning can blend pathos with humor, and his pathos is most intimate and poignant and tender. A good example of this is seen in the violent roughness suddenly changing to the depths of pleading in *Holy Cross Day*, whose combination of the two is indeed the work of a Hebrew of the Hebrews.

Fee, faw, fum! bubble and squeak!
Blessedest Thursday's the fat of the week.
Rumble and tumble, sleek and rough,
Stinking and savoury, smug and gruff,
Take the church-road, for the bell's due chime
Gives us the summons — 'tis sermon-time! . . .

Thou! if thou wast He, who at mid-watch came,
By the starlight, naming a dubious name!
And if, too heavy with sleep — too rash
With fear — O Thou, if that martyr-gash
Fell on Thee coming to take thine own,
And we gave the Cross, when we owed the Throne —

When he makes us weep we cry out upon the pity of it almost with despair. Yet if we believe in life, we are very near to an outburst of laughter, for he makes us see that the situation is too absurd to be permanently true.

In his individualism too and his intense interest in the individual, he wears the garment of Carlyle. "My stress," he says, "lay on incidents in the development of a soul: little else is worth study." In this great dictum he reminds us of Sir William Hamilton's equally famous saying: "On earth there is nothing great but man: in man there is nothing great but mind." It was under the influence of this conviction that Browning carved those wonderful statues which he

named *Men and Women*, each piece a reproduction of a life absolutely individual and detached. Not Carlyle himself has provided for the imagination of future ages clearer chisel-work or more definitely described individuals than Browning in his dramatic portraitures.

In respect of strength and the delight in strength, it is unnecessary to spend any time in illustration, for it is by this that he is known best of all.

We ask
To put forth just our strength, our human strength
All starting fairly, all equipped alike.
Gifted alike, all eagle-eyed, true-hearted.

That and much more of the same sort continually recurs. He is strong with a certain youthful boisterousness that persists through all his work, and only pauses here and there in passages of exquisite lyric sweetness. He loves the grotesque and is an expert in gargoyle-work. He himself has told us of the beetle, the spider, the worm, and the eft, "I always liked all those wild creatures God sets up for themselves." It may be that this grotesqueness of taste is a deep-seated quality in the man, which has overflowed now and then in the rhymes and meters and words for which he

has been so much criticized. He was a lover of the uncouth side of life — "life's follies, surprises, defects, amusing uglinesses." This characteristic is one of the essential qualities of the strong man whose strength inclines towards roughness, and it is very congenial to the Hebraic mind. It would be easy to quote many passages demonstrating how the strong man's delight in labor pervades Browning's spirit and reveals itself in his work. He himself is an untiring workman whose labor never becomes drab-colored and weary, but remains always a battle rather than a task. His is the essential soldier-spirit, forever fighting and forever rejoicing in "one fight more."

In all these ways we may recognize in him much that we have admired and been blessed by in Hebrew prophets, both in and out of the Bible. It is unquestionably a very strongly marked element in his nature. If it were isolated and considered entirely by itself, it would give us the picture of Browning which lives in the imagination of some of his critics. But the marvelous fact is that he has been able to add to it and to blend with it the very finest and most perfect spirit of the Greek, who here dwells side by side with his Eastern neighbor in a fellowship altogether astonishing.

A curious illustration will be found in two of Browning's most characteristic metaphors. In *Bishop Blougram's Apology* he uses with strange effect the figure of the chessboard, with its alternate black and white squares. There, in discussing doubt and faith, he speaks of those who pick out the black squares or the white, and determine from this selection their general estimate of life. The sceptic chooses black, the believer white. The view of the one is a life of doubt diversified by faith, that of the other is a life of faith diversified by doubt. The other illustration is given us in the poem named *A Bean-stripe* in *Ferishtah's Fancies*, where alternate black and white beans are strewn upon the ground. The black stand for the evil elements of life and the white for the good, and the question is, which we are to take for reality. In both these poems there are some very wonderful expressions of the quality of mingled dark and bright, and the way in which the one tinges and modifies the other. Nothing could more aptly or more curiously express the difference between the Hebrew and the Greek moods than this. The Hebrew in Browning sees the black and the white clear and distinct, and it is the mark of a Hebraic mind that he should have

used these metaphors and made them so emphatic. But the resolution of the two into a harmonious whole is, after all, his real contribution. In the present time many of us have felt the weariness and unreality of a world of crude black and white, and have rejoiced in those who were sent into such a world in order to show us the values of gray. Such, loving and wondering at the world as they find it, feel the power of its opalescent and blending colour. God made Browning with an eye for gray: and in this age, which still rocks between the blinding white and the hopeless black of sweeping and ignorant judgments, there are many who welcome the coolness and refreshment which he brings. This, however, leads us on to our final study, for it is a very characteristic development of the spirit of Browning the Greek.

VI

ROBERT BROWNING
THE GREEK

IN our last chapter we recounted some of those deep-seated elements of Hebraism which mark the character and work of Robert Browning. Our contention is that he stands for the synthesis of the Hebrew with the Greek spirit in life and thought. The Hebrew is more strongly marked and aggressive in the earlier work, but it persists as a living conscience to the end. The Greek, in its vast opulence of appreciation, flows in a broader stream at the end, yet we see it from the very first. Indeed, that is to state the case much too mildly. *Pauline*, his youngest work, is an elaborate confession of Hellenism as if it were a sin. It is the Hebrew conscience that is responsible for this state of matters, but the Hellenistic confessions are interesting and delightful, as such confessions are apt to be. One notes the frequent references to Euripides in *Pauline*,

and indeed it is no wonder that this should strike the keynote. Long afterwards Browning wrote of him:

Our Euripides, the human,
With his droppings of warm tears,
And his touches of things common
Till they rose to touch the spheres.

In *Pauline* we see the magic of Greece playing about the poet's mind in the freshness of the morning light.

Yet, I say, never morn broke clear as those
On the dim clustered isles in the blue sea,
The deep groves and white temples and wet caves.

This sort of thing occurs everywhere in his work. There are passages in *Fifine* which could not be surpassed for their Hellenic beauty — unless perhaps *Cleon* surpasses them and all else. Cleon's contemptuous ignorance of Paul and all that the Apostle stood for, sets deliberately a Hebraic background for his exquisite delight in Greece.

Cleon the poet (from the sprinkled isles
Lily on lily, that o'erlace the sea,
And laugh their pride when the light wave lisps "Greece").

It may be replied to him who would claim Browning for Greece that quotations in them-

selves show very little. Montaigne is perpetually quoting Roman and Greek sayings and phrases: yet, through all, he remains the authentic and undiluted mayor of Bordeaux. There is a statue of Charles II, one of the very few leaden statues which have come down to us for some centuries, where the king is dressed like Julius Caesar, and tries in a heavy kind of manner to look the part. Yet he is undoubtedly the leaden Charles, trying in vain, as Robert Louis Stevenson has quaintly said, to draw away from his dangerous neighbor, John Knox, whose grave lies almost under his horse's feet. There are many such moderns who, by quotation or trick of style, dress themselves in antique garb for an occasion: but after their little play with Plutarch's folk, they "sink back to their former nothingness." Browning is not of that number. One feels in reading every quotation or reference of his, that the very spirit of Greece is speaking through his lips. Indeed, apart from all such direct allusions, he seems to dwell and be at home among the Grecian gods and men.

In direct translation he does not perhaps show at his best. *Aristophanes' Apology* and the *Agamemnon of Æschylus* are such translations that some have perhaps found the original easier to

read. But in his *Balaustion's Adventure* he gives us a transcript of the *Alkestis* of Æschylus which is one of the most superb pieces of English writing. It is as if a Greek poet had happened to be born in England and had combined the best of the two races in a masterpiece which belonged equally to both.

It is not, however, in quotations or references or translations that we find the main point of our theme. We have already called attention to the second period of Browning's work, which may be named the dramatic. In the poems of those forty years or so we find him going out with an infinite curiosity, searching the world for types of character and emotion, and arranging in long unclassified rows such random specimens as he finds everywhere. Thus it came to pass that almost all his poems are dramatic fragments. His catholicity is alien to Greek and Hebrew alike, for he did not call outsiders either Barbarians or Gentiles, and thus he was saved from the provincialism both of Athens and of Jerusalem. He was interested in people in their own right. That interest and curiosity were, indeed, part of his Hellenism, but in the breadth of his sympathy he entirely outdid Hellas.

The range of his works in this field is indeed enormous. His imagination is cosmic, and he delights in bringing together the most opposite ideas,

As one spring wind unbinds the mountain snows
And comforts violets in their hermitage.

These lines are a splendid specimen of the cosmic imagination. They link together the vast masses and powers of the mountain snow-fields with the humblest flowerets appealing to the wind for comfort. At times he shows what may be called a kind of titanic impertinence, as when he in his own person silences King David and Ernest Renan with the astonishing line:

Friends, I have seen through your eyes: now use mine!

From the point of view of dramatic interest, to him, as to Mr. Rudyard Kipling's cat, all places are alike — all situations, subjects, nationalities, epochs: all history, science, painting, sculpture, music: all politics, theology, law, medicine. These are his province. Sin and virtue, beauty and ugliness, everything that is — all come under his observation.

Man's thoughts and loves and hates!
Earth is my vineyard, these grow there;
From grape of the ground, I made or marred
My vintage.

The dangers of such a dramatic course as this are obvious, and they may be summed up in the one general risk of the poet losing all morality in the mere curiosity of interest. He may be carried away by some of his particular impersonations. That is a common danger with artistic people. The excitement of imagining this life or that from within, the experience of seeing deep down into the soul, is apt to become so wonderful a thing in itself as to sweep away all ethical considerations. The conventional person is indeed the only secure one. In these days of scientific and popular hygiene, it would sometimes seem as if the only really safe way to live were to spend one's lifetime in a carbolic bath, and so escape the contamination of vast armies of microbes, and other distressing and unnecessary discoveries of physical science. There is a corresponding danger for the artistic spirit. He who emerges from the carbolic bath of conventional respectability may end by riding a coach and six through the ten commandments. There is little danger to Browning from the grosser forms of vice, and even his self-identification with the soul of *Guido* only shows up more beautifully the white delicacy of *Pompilia*. But the delicious playfulness of *Fra*

Lippo Lippi may have more power to shake a Puritan earnestness than the unabashed exposition of the spirit of *Caliban*. It is not for nothing that a man can write such lines as these:

> *— tho' music wait for me*
> *And fair eyes and bright wine laughing like sin*
> *Which steals back softly on a soul half-saved.*

A second danger may lie in the accumulated effects of a lifetime spent in such dramatic work. The actor who in his time plays many parts, may be supposed to work a change upon his soul which will inure it to anything that comes, and render it morally dispassionate. Such a poet as Browning might well, we should have thought, become a mere observer, advocating no views of his own; a sophist, looking on and discussing life with great cleverness, but with a diminished number of convictions. The morals of *The Statue and the Bust* amount simply to a demand for strenuousness in one's adopted course. The moral quality of that course appears to be a negligible detail. Nothing could be less Hebrew than this. The favorite note of the Hebrew prophet is that Israel must be unique, unlike all other men; and dispassionateness in morals is a heinous crime for the Hebrew.

It is very wonderful, however, to find how completely Browning, with all his wide wanderings in the dramatic field, has managed to resist such dangers as these. For the time being he is wholly identified with the personage he is creating or describing, and certainly he wrote *The Statue and the Bust*. Yet one never can tell how much such a poem as that is an experiment in point of view, and it would be difficult and very precarious to pin him down to it as a record of his own personal conviction. At every stage of his life there occur passages which show the undiverted moral earnestness of the man. He has gone through every phase to which it is possible to expose the human conscience, and he comes out with the master passion of righteousness still dominant. Writing of Dante he gives us the immortal lines:

> *(Peradventure with a pen corroded*
> *Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped for,*
> *When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the wicked,*
> *Back he held the brow and pricked its stigma,*
> *Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment,*
> *Loosed him, laughed to see the writing rankle,*
> *Let the wretch go festering through Florence) —*
> *Dante, who loved well because he hated,*
> *Hated wickedness that hinders loving.*

There is, however, this difference between Dante and Browning, that the Italian never ceases to avow and reiterate his hatred and contempt for almost all the sins which he so bitterly scourges, confessing but rarely some sympathy with temptations which are congenial to his own nature. Browning, on the other hand, has an amazing faculty of plunging into the life of diverse souls, and looking alike upon temptation and on crime from the point of view of the tempted and the criminal.

Thus it is true that while he escaped the dangers of a relaxed morality which are associated with certain types of Hellenism, he did allow himself a wider view of mankind and of human morality, than would have been possible to him apart from Greece.

> *For men begin to pass their nature's bound*
> *And find new hopes and cares which fast supplant*
> *Their proper joys and griefs: they grow too great*
> *For narrow creeds of right and wrong, which fade*
> *Before the unmeasured thirst for good: while peace*
> *Rises within them evermore.*

In *Fifine* there is one of the most characteristic of all his suggestive metaphors. It is the *Eidotheé*, the block of marble carved, as so much of Michel-

angelo's work is carved, suggestively rather than completely. You can fancy you see the goddess just emerging from the stone, but you cannot trace her in definite lines of sculpture. So in human nature Browning finds, according to the ancient Greek, much that is "divine or human or both mixed." The human soul for him is elusive, suggestive: and the poet's art must study reticence when it fain would attempt to tell everything. The great task is to find the divine in the human rather than apart from it. The supreme example of his own performance of that task is the way in which he found God, and was able to assure himself of his faith in God, through the fact and experience of human love.

This brings us within sight of Browning's passion for truth as such. Unlike Carlyle and Matthew Arnold, he never assigns to scientific truth a subordinate place. Only he appeals, as in *Francis Furini*, to the evolutionists of the day to realize how great and spiritual a task is theirs, and to find, beyond the mere facts of physical science, the vast wealth of spiritual meaning which is open to those who have eyes to see and courage to venture. It is interesting to contrast him with Tennyson in this matter. No poet was more in-

terested in modern scientific discovery than Tennyson, who borrowed one of his most famous lines from the tracks of the newly-invented railway, and who accepted the new doctrine of evolution with a kind of consternation, as a discovery of "nature red in tooth and claw." It is by such allusions as these that he has so entirely identified himself with the age in which he lived, and will stand forever a noble representative of the shy contacts between faith and science in his time. Browning has no shyness in his search for truth. He is absolutely without fear in this or any other province. The enormously wide culture which provided him with so abundant a world was for him neither more nor less than a duty. It was a "crime to let a truth slip."

> *Hill, vale, tree, flower — they stand distinct,*
> *Nature to know and name.*

This last phrase, "know and name," is an extraordinarily characteristic one. It illustrates his whole attitude to truth as such. His is the rage of knowing, the unbounded curiosity of the Greek seeker for truth. His is also the scientist's demand for exactness. He will not only know: he will name, that he may keep his knowledge dis-

tinct and clear. In his poem, *How it Strikes a Contemporary*, one might almost say that one finds the best example in literature of Matthew Arnold's definition of poetry as a criticism of life.

Thus, for Browning, earth is essentially the place of learning along the whole line of existence. It is a pupil's place, where a man ought to test his manhood everywhere upon the facts alike of good and evil, of joy and sorrow. This is with him a profound and vaunted principle. He is the champion of the value of earth as well as heaven, of body as well as soul, and of sense as well as spirit. He is an intense lover of the world. All through his work he makes bold assertions of this principle, not less in his *Parleyings with Certain Personages* than in the magnificent early plea for it in *Fra Lippo Lippi*. It even carries him beyond itself. So fascinated is he by the fact of things as they are, the bright world alike of body and of spirit, that we find recurring protests against any change in things. In *James Lee's Wife* we have one of the strongest of these:

Only, for man, how bitter not to grave
On his soul's hands' palms one fair good wise thing
Just as he grasped it!

We all know his protest in *Abt Vogler*:

Never to be again! . . .
. . . is this your comfort to me?
To me, who must be saved because I cling with my mind
To the same, same self, same love, same God: ay, what was, shall be.

In all this we may note new phases of the dangers to which we have already referred. The Greek curiosity does tend to be dispassionate, and there is no doubt that in Browning there was that same desire which is recorded of those who heard Paul on Mars' Hill, merely to hear or tell some new thing. He who loves facts as such, for the sheer interest of them, certainly runs some risk. Perhaps the most obvious danger will be a habit of casuistry. The dispassionate discussions of the sophists, indulged in solely for the pleasure of discussing, must necessarily tempt such an one. In the third period of his poetic work he may be said to have yielded to this temptation, and to have supplanted for the time being the earlier flash of intuitions by the duller habit of argument. Yet we see traces of this in earlier work of his, for there was from the beginning a very striking tendency, half playful half in earnest, to justify the other side of every question. *Bishop Blougram* and *Mr.*

Sludge the Medium are cases in point, and there are still traces of the same habit of mind in his latest works. Casuistry is a word which has often been used in connection with Browning. It means a purely intellectual play of argument about a problem, apart from all considerations of truth, morality, or consequences. It is concerned neither with the distinctively spiritual, nor religious, nor any other point of view, except that of the argument in hand. There was in Robert Browning a twofold nature. He was both a casuist and a prophet. It might seem at first that these are wholly incongruous, and that one of them must cancel the other or modify it. Yet it is not so. It was said brilliantly of a recent journalist that he was a prophet spoiled by being a reporter. It may be said of Robert Browning that he was a prophet enriched and educated and made more effective by being a casuist.

For there is nothing intrinsically wicked in casuistry. It has an immense fund of intellectual humor in it, the natural delight of a clever person in being perverse and provoking, and paradoxical, and epigrammatic. Now the epigram is just a chartered lie; it is never entirely true, and yet it is permitted because its lie may sometimes drive

home a fuller truth. But the epigram should be permitted only to humorists. In those remote parts of western America, where civilization has not yet attained its eastern perfection, they have a way of saying to men who pronounce certain sentiments, "Smile when you say that." It is valuable advice to the poet, and may account for some of Browning's whimsical moods of casuistry.

But we are here facing a far subtler problem, which cannot be settled as easily. The motive of the casuist, if he be a great man and not a little one, is that desire for balance, that habit of reserving one's own preferences and tastes, which is the sign of the practised seeker after truth. He must learn detachment if he is going to find that for which he seeks. He must be able to look on at life as a spectacle, if he would see it justly. The complexity which troubles us all, does not merely lie in the arguments which we are able to conduct about the universe, but in the facts themselves and our own experiences. The contradictory and manifold facts of life, with their endless incongruities, baffle us. It would seem as if there were a dash of casuistry in Nature, and it is the part of those who would follow her strange ways with intelligence to let each of her facts have fair play,

and to allow it to make the best case it can in self-defence. This was what Robert Browning did in his marvelously skilful analyses of life and experience. He quite often treats them as merely theoretical problems, isolated from all connection with the general facts of life, to be thought out for the sake of their own amusing tangle, as a very fascinating exercise of the mind.

Everyone can see how dangerous this mood is. Mozley accused some of his fellow-countrymen of having so long accustomed themselves to casuistry that they were unable to trust an argument when they had got it. And there was an old professor who warned his students against this too dispassionate mood, advising them not to whittle down the blunt meaning of the Scriptures — "He who, so to speak, believeth not, shall (as it were) be damned." Yet for Robert Browning casuistry was but an exercise after all. When one begins to tremble for Browning's ultimate convictions, there always breaks forth the intuitive and prophetic spirit in him which sends plausible argument to right and left. No one who has ever read *The Ring and the Book* will forget the marvelous way in which, after giving so abundant scope to casuistry of every kind, he tears his way through it all

to truth. For him ultimately God is a magnificent realization, and not the last conclusion of an argument. Faith in God is a conviction arrived at through his own certainty of the reality of the soul of man, and of the fact of love within man's soul. These are such intensely vital experiences that there is no sense, and absolutely no necessity, in the attempt to confirm them by argument. The great demonstration of their reality is just the direct fact of our consciousness: and the best argument for the existence of God is that He is obviously there. Thus Browning prefers to tread the higher way of truth, trusting to direct knowledge which cannot be argued about.

Enough now, if the Right
And Good and Infinite
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own,
With knowledge absolute,
Subject to no dispute
From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone.

In regard to beauty, Browning is Greek to the core. His vivid sense of color brings us back to the days when the statues and buildings of the Greek temples were tinted; and when Paul saw, in the houses rebuilt from the ruins of ancient Corinth, touches of gold and silver and costly

stones. In some of his poems Browning allows himself the most oriental and luxurious license, and revels in color, as in *The Bishop Orders his Tomb at Saint Praxed's*. Yet true beauty is never merely decorative. It is essentially constructive, and is to be found in the lines of the structure itself rather than the ornamentation of it. Art for art's sake is a phrase that has been much misunderstood. If it includes the constructive idea, it is true and right; if it condemns art to be merely a collection of decorative detail, it is always and dangerously wrong. Thus beauty and truth are ultimately one. Sidney Lanier says of Poe, whom he esteemed highly: "The trouble with Poe, was, he did not know enough. He needed to know a good many more things in order to be a great poet." Lanier himself had a passion for the exact truth and for the whole of it, yet many readers will wonder whether this is a happy instance on which to found a theory. Certainly we may admit that Poe would have been a greater poet if his work had covered a larger field of knowledge: yet, the quality of his work is so essentially poetic that it almost balances the account. Poetry ought indeed to have regard to truth and to be a criticism of life; but it is a certain kind of

truth with which poetry concerns itself, rather than truth in the abstract. The truth for which poetry cares is personal, passionate, and has reference not only to veracity but also to vivacity, especially in regard to beauty and to feeling. Divorced from these, it has no place in poetry at all. Robert Browning would have supported this. In his *Aristophanes' Apology* he says:

> *He wants not falsehood, truth alone he seeks,*
> *Truth for all beauty, beauty in all truth, . . .*
> *Trust on, trust ever, trust to end — in truth.*

Art holds up the mirror to nature and can never surpass her. In art we see

> *Man, poor elf,*
> *Striving to match the finger-marks of Him*
> *The immeasurably matchless.*

Or again

> *Art, which I may style the love of loving, rage*
> *Of knowing, seeing, feeling, the absolute truth of things.*

So that art becomes ultimately, "One blaze of truth undeadened by a lie."

We have qualified Arnold's definition of poetry as "a criticism of life," by insisting that it is true only in so far as we remember that the proper sphere for poetry is not abstract truth, but truth

in relation to beauty and to feeling. This, as we have already seen, leads towards pathos. Much of the truth of life is sad, and when poetry expresses such truth we have the pathetic, of which Browning is so great a master. It is very wonderful to turn from the uproarious bursts of laughter and the rough horseplay of some of his work to such a passage as the description of the dying nun in *James Lee's Wife*, or the finest parts of the speeches of Caponsacchi and Pompilia in *The Ring and the Book*. This, however, is a large subject and would require longer treatment. All that concerns us here is its suggestion of the Greek melancholy, which gives us another aspect of Browning's Hellenism.

Not less noteworthy is his use of balance and poise. We have seen this to be the essential Greek quality, which made the characteristic difference between Greeks and Barbarians. The love of moderation, the habit of compromise, or of well-modulated achievement, is the crux and test of the Greek spirit. At first Robert Browning seems singularly lacking in this. The one-sidedness of *Pauline*, for instance, must strike every reader of it. Indeed the peculiar mark of Browning in much of his work appears to be a

lavish wastefulness, as of a kind of poetic cornucopia out of which vast wealth is poured without stint. He seems "wasteful as drunkenness at undue times." It may be admitted that this is a source of weakness in his work. He often has too much to say and tries to say it all, so that the words and thoughts tumble over each other. It would be easy to find instances of what Pater would call surplusage, which we note as "inability to leave out the needless." Tennyson who, of all the poets, has himself most exquisitely in hand, perpetually revised and re-revised his poems: while it is characteristic of Browning that he never revised his work at all. Doubtless in all this there is a certain element of loss, yet it is not without its gain as well. Many of his thoughts are not in the least worked out, but just on that account they have a flying charm as of fugitive and half-seen things. He does not explain them or expose them for more than a moment to vision, but gives hints and suggestions which create moods in our mind. Often we see the things he shows us through a mist or aura of highly colored light. We see them only in a flash, feel our spirit wakened by them, then miss them — for the elusive things are gone. The Prologue to *Fifine*,

which he titles *Amphibian*, well expresses this habit of his mind.

Perhaps the most interesting result of this too great abundance, is the odd lack of proportion, which is seen oftenest in his illustrations. The thing he wishes to tell may be a quite simple thing, but he will go on explaining it until he has brought all heaven and earth and hell to witness that it is so. In his *One Word More*, a piece of his very most exquisite writing, he strives to explain that this poem is a personal gift to his wife, and therefore stands apart from all the rest, which is dramatic. But in order to tell her this, he has to travel over the universe from Dante to the reverse side of the moon to find illustrations. In *Paracelsus* he uses the most gorgeous nature work that can possibly be conceived to illustrate quite ordinary phases of mind or human episode. In such instances, however, one must remember that Browning is quite consistent in his lavishness. He prefers man to nature, and the smallest human truth is for him always a matter worth summoning the whole universe to explain. Thus, in detail, he is undoubtedly unbalanced, and has parted with the ideals of the Greek art. Yet in this respect he finds himself again upon the larger scale,

where he is always balancing and always poised. *Paracelsus* in detail may have those defects, if defects they be, which we have pointed out; yet where will you find a more complete statement of the respective claims of love and of knowledge than that which the poem offers? Similarly *La Saisiaz* is one long intricate discussion between reason and fancy, which reminds us of antique theological controversies between justice and mercy. All through his work, from beginning to end, he sees the universe swinging between the rival poles of love and power, and the main part of his life's task is to reconcile these and bring them to a unity.

This leads us to note his sense of wholeness, which is the ultimate and highest achievement of the Greek genius. The Greek chorus takes up each incident in the play and saves it from one-sidedness by treating it as part of the whole life of the universe. Thus does Robert Browning perpetually refuse to keep the human and the divine separate, as if they dwelt in water-tight compartments, so that one could love the one and not the other. When he tells us that he is seeking "whole results," or that in heaven there will be "a perfect round," he means more than whole-

ness, even in Matthew Arnold's sense. With Arnold it stood for a rounded and many-sided view of things. With Browning it is more distinctly defined, as a view in which the heavenly and eternal meanings of things will be included, as well as the earthly ones. Perhaps the best known instance of this is the magnificent close of *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, where he takes up the Hebrew metaphor of the potter's wheel, and enlarges and enriches it into a view of human life which is indeed "divine or human or both mixed."

The final result of all this in Browning is the construction of a synthesis of life in which both the Greek and the Hebrew elements are included and become mutually helpful. When a spirit like his goes forth to the wide freedom of the world in dramatic mood, hunting simply for types of experience, and prepared to be indulgent to them all and give to each its due, we watch anxiously for his return. If he will, he is likely to be able to tell us of a faith that is native and common to humanity. He has tested his faith upon all sorts and conditions of men and circumstances. What then will be his resultant view of life? We have to repeat that the dogmatic systems of faith are

left behind him more and more completely. Yet the central faith remains, while its forms are in most cases changed. He did not cling through all events to the forms of truth which he took with him originally. He preserved his faith because he found it everywhere confronting him in the most diverse instances and lives. He began with powerful intuitions and went forth to test them by the actual facts of life indiscriminately gathered and treated, and he found that the facts verified the intuitions. Therefore there is in truth, as he sees it, a flexibility and a vitality which are not matched by the doctrine of any other modern writer. He is tolerant of many phases of life which are often excluded from religion — he is tolerant of them because he knows them, and, as the French say, "To know all is to forgive all." He is saved, by the wideness of his wanderings, from the Hebraic rigidness and stiffness and unchangeableness of form, but he preserves all the more a dogged sincerity of his own. He is saved from the dangers of the returning dramatist — from dispassionateness of mood and moral indifference — because certain fundamental convictions of his have proved sufficient for the tests of a most daring survey of life.

As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry "All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!"

He has been claimed by the folk of the chapel on the heath in *Christmas Eve*, but anyone can see that his faith was wider than theirs, and that he was saved from such narrowness alike by his sense of beauty and his dramatic universalism. He has been claimed by the worldlings, and he has indeed said much that seemed to rank him among their numbers; yet it is quite obvious that he never revealed his deepest soul to them. He is greater than either of his claimants, and he returns to us with spoils gathered from them both. His religious views are founded not upon dogma and authority, but upon experience of inner necessities verified by outward facts. He is the Ritschl among the poets, for whom the ultimate basis of authority must ever be found within. Thus he is kept from religious provincialism of every sort. All narrowness of church and creed arises by constructing our faith upon a partial and limited set of facts. Narrow people have not been round the world, and their first necessity is to make the grand tour. Browning has studied the soul in all its moods and in the whole play of life upon it. He has discovered

love in every imaginable and actual phase. Love has revealed God to him over all and in all human life, and from this high discovery he turns back to experience and reads it in the light of that which he has found.

It is this which explains his optimism. Had he been Hebrew alone, he would have led our eyes too constantly beyond the world for truth and beauty. We should have heard the fascinating command of life, and had to make the best of its constant disappointment and failure, spurning from us alike its pleasure and its pain that we might lay hold upon the world to come. Had he been Greek alone, he would have tried to forget the disappointment and busied himself in gathering the flowers, with only the recurring melancholy that would have filled our hearts with the pathetic remembrance that the world passeth away. But he who can combine these two elements, finding his God not abstractly, but in the best that earth and soul can show, supplies us with the gospel that is most of all needed in this age, so distracted between the two main tendencies. His optimism is not summed up in the general statement that

> *God's in his heaven —*
> *All's right with the world!*

It is expressed at greater length and with more convincing courage.

Why should despair be? since distinct above
Man's wickedness and folly, flies the wind
And floats the cloud, free transport for our soul,
Out of its earthly durance dim and low
. . . Greed and strife,
Hatred and cark and care, what place have they,
In yon blue liberality of heaven?

Oh world, as God has made it! All is beauty:
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.
What further may be sought for or declared?

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